Long-Term Continuity and Change within Hebridean and Mainland Scottish Island Dwellings

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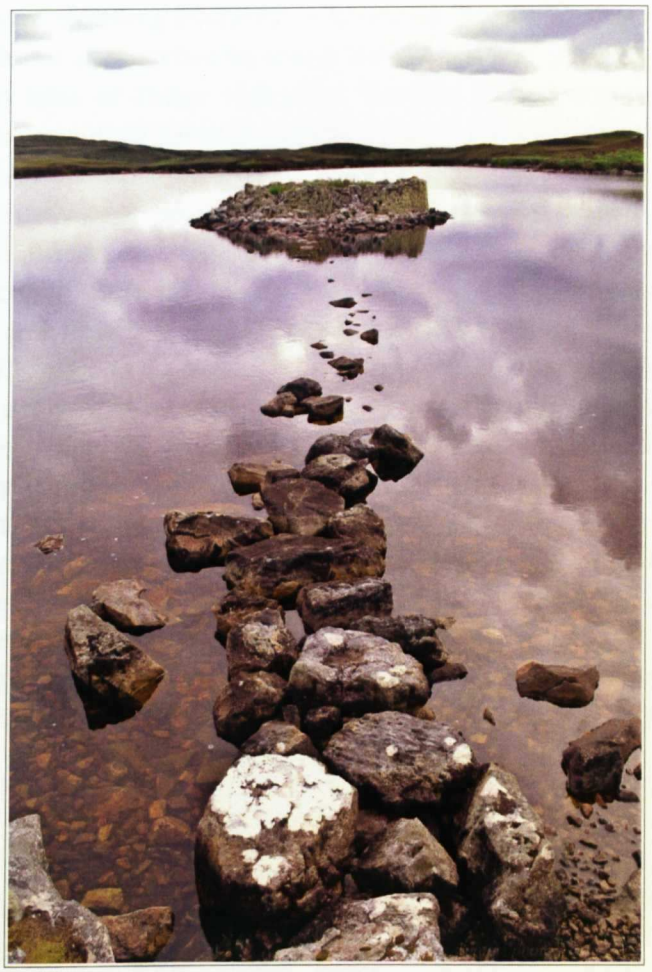

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Abstract

Small island dwellings in Scotland and Ireland, typically (and often problematically) referred to as *crannogs*, have experienced growing archaeological activity in the past three decades through survey, underwater investigation and excavation. This renewed activity has prompted a number of recent research projects, both field and desk based in nature. While the end result has certainly created a clearer picture of life on small islets from the Neolithic to the Post-Medieval period, particularily in Scotland there are several fundamental aspects that are long overdue for attention. First, rather than focussing upon niche periods such as the Iron Age, I have choosen to examine continuity and change over the entirety of the island dwelling tradition in Scotland. Secondly, this thesis also marks a departure from traditional approaches by integrating mainland crannog studies with those found in the Western Isles or Outer Hebrides. Despite having the highest density and longest chronology for occupied islets in Scotland, very little fieldwork has been carried out in the Western Isles. Ironically, examples in the Western Isles, generally referred to as 'island duns', have typically been viewed in isolation from their mainland counterpart the 'crannog', despite Hebridean activity appearing to embrace the concept more fully. Ultimately, it is the recognition in this thesis that both areas share the same core concept - living on small islets, and how the integration of Hebridean sites into existing discourses on mainland occupied islets can be mutually beneficial. This thesis wishes to reddress this imbalance while also examining how archaeological terminology can divide the common conceptual denominator of living on small islets. Another aspect includes an examination of the phenomena of prolific reuse amongst island dwellings, as almost every islet excavation in Scotland has provided evidence of reuse, often several centuries or more after initial occupation. Therefore, another aim of this thesis is to analyse use patterns over the long-term, and examine why people repeatedly went to the effort of living on small islets. This thesis also indicates how the motivations for islet use range from pragmatic to more symbolic concerns. These underlying motivations for islet use in Scotland are found to vary greatly, and extend beyond the typical defence hypothesis.

This thesis is the result of my own work and has not been presented to any university in support of an application for any other degree than that for which I am now a candidate.

Robert Lenfert, September 15th 2011.

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Chapter 1
Setting the Agenda for Scottish Island Dwellings: Background, Methodology and Concepts

1.1 Introduction and aims of thesis

Small occupied islets, often artificial in nature, are located throughout much of Scotland and Ireland (figs. 1.1, 1.2 & 1.3). These islands are typically known as *crannogs,* although much variation in terminology exists, and were constructed and re-used from at least the Neolithic Period until the 18th century. This unsurpassed legacy has manifested itself as a deeply ingrained tradition of often 'building islands for building homes', and is arguably one of the longest surviving settlement traditions in Western Europe. This lengthy time scale witnesses the emergence of static settlement forms along with agriculture in Scotland, later to survive both Roman and Norse interludes, until the tradition witnesses an abrupt demise during the Post-Medieval period through increasingly complex social hierarchies and changing social structures and preferences in architecture.

An examination of why this phenomenon survived for over five millennia provides a rare, if not unique, opportunity to examine changing attitudes in society to the significance and meaning of these enigmatic structures over the *longue durée*. It is demonstrated in this thesis how internal and external factors, ranging from a likely prehistoric reverence for water to increasing defence and status in the Medieval period, helped to shape various facets of this tradition. By employing a 'long view' approach (p.11, below) subtle or low-resolution changes in both the practice and cognitive perception of islet settlement become increasingly visible as the tradition reasserts itself through the millennia (Hodder 1992: 3). A substantial feature of this analysis is the reappraisal of a disparate classification scheme that isolates Hebridean islet settlement through overly restrictive definitions that prevent a lucid interpretation of the tradition. As a result, this thesis will provide the first comprehensive narrative of the island dwelling tradition in Scotland, unblinkered by rigid classifications which have divided a common social phenomena.

Recent archaeological research has targeted specific aspects of island dwellings such as data recovery and techniques (Dixon 1984; Crone 1988), a prehistoric floruit (Armit 1992; Henderson 1998, 2000; Cavers 2010), the complexities of taphonomy (Crone, *et al.* 2001; Cavers 2007; Crone 2007; Henderson 2007, 2007a), Inner Hebridean descriptions and geography (Holley 2000), intertidal marine crannogs (Hale 2004) or later medieval use (Raven 2005; Shelly 2005). Despite this substantial corpus of recent research, a synthesis which examines the use and changing meanings of island dwellings through time has remained elusive. Examples of the longevity and persistence which personify the character of island dwelling use are most visible the Western Isles, yet ironically Hebridean sites are either completely absent or only briefly mentioned in mainland analyses despite their undeniable influence upon the entire tradition (*see* Ch.5). Here in the Western Isles, evidence points to their fullest expression, both chronologically and morphologically. In addition, the use of Hebridean sites has persisted well into the Post-Medieval period and ultimately spans at least five millennia. Another factor which runs parallel with the aims of this thesis is the phenomenon of construction, re-use and re-occupation throughout Scotland which has also not been examined in detail until now.

This state of affairs has left the overall context of island dwellings in a fragmented state, with the primary efforts in existence focusing upon the later millennium BC, when both island dwelling use and construction peaked in popularity (Henderson 1998: 230). A subsequent gap has now developed, primarily regarding the changing relationship of island dwellings within society, while the primary focus on later prehistoric use has a tendency to polarise research questions within specific threads. This 'coagulation' in island dwelling studies can be largely attributed to both the lengthy chronology and broad distribution of island dwellings, which tends to lure researchers into fragmented chronologies and regional narratives. This tendency to concentrate solely upon particular periods, in the words of Ian Armit: 'encourages the construction of chronological ghettos' (1996: 227), in this case, the Bronze Age and Norse Periods. Therefore, a balanced examination of the cultural drivers behind island settlement should be as concerned with periods of widespread abandonment as with those of peak popularity and revival.

Figure 1.1 *Distribution of all known or suspected 571 island dwellings in the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. Different icons represent classification by the RCAHMS, i.e. 'crannog' (white), 'dun' (red), island dwelling', 'fortified island' and 'artificial island' (all three in yellow). An aim of this thesis is to examine the utility of this system.*

Figure 1.2 *For comparison to fig. 1.1: GIS-based density distribution of islets with artificial features from Cavers (2010). This map provides a sense of regional densities yet only single plot maps can reveal locations along nodal points in the landscape.*

Figure 1.3 *Distribution of lacustrine site in Ireland for comparison (Fredengren 2002).*

Over 160 radiocarbon or dendrochronological dates now exist for Scottish island dwellings, these are discussed below in the relevant chapter for each geographical region. Combined with the growing corpus of chronological data stemming from recent excavation and survey, typological sequencing and historical notices, a coherent picture regarding the development, use and changing meaning of island dwellings can now be assembled. The research presented within this thesis will not only examine implications behind the re-use of a markedly distinct site-type throughout time, but will lead to an increased understanding of the changing identities behind the wider socio-political centralisation of Northern Britain, resulting in the unified entity we know today as Scotland. Building upon the above, this thesis will examine Scottish island dwellings within their social and chronological context by focusing upon several main themes:

- To what extent does the construction and occupation of island dwellings represent a specific expression of cultural behaviour in Scotland?

- Why was living on water important? Is this importance related to defence, ease of travel, symbolic or ritual concerns or simply pragmatic motivations?

- What is the significance of any differences, both structurally and chronologically, between areas of Scotland where island dwellings are found?

- How relevant is construction of wholly artificial islet foundations as opposed to the use of natural islands? Should this difference have a central importance in the definition of what constitutes a Scottish 'crannog'?

- How widespread is the re-use of island dwellings in different periods and why?

- What can be inferred from the material recovered from island dwellings about their role in society? Do these roles change over time and space?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The remainder of this chapter will briefly outline a current view of island dwellings based upon recent research. This is followed by an interpretative consideration of island dwelling use and meaning in light of the widespread associated re-use and possible interpretations of changing or growing 'status' of the occupants, and how they might be

viewed today by the wider public. To close this chapter, I will provide a brief history of island dwelling research. Although this has been outline in detail elsewhere (Morrison 1985; Holley 2000; Dixon 2004; Cavers 2005), this history is limited to mainland sites and does not cover work in the Western Isles. Chapter 2 reviews current issues with island dwelling definitions and classification, primarily in the NMRS database (i.e. Canmore). This chapter also discusses how and why many site classifications need to be amended or reconsidered to fully grasp the island dwelling tradition in Scotland, rather than disjointed studies of certain typologies (i.e. artificial islets or natural islets with Atlantic roundhouses). Chapter 3 takes a regional view of south-western Scotland, namely Dumfries & Galloway and Ayrshire. The south west has been a traditional area of crannog study since the mid-19th century, greatly influencing early interpretations which still are common today.

The early work of Munro (1882), and later C.M. Piggot at Milton Loch (1953), set the initial chronological framework of island dwellings in a Roman context based upon material assemblages - a concept we now know to be incorrect since the widespread adoption of absolute dating methods. The contrast between the south-west and Cumbria across the Solway Firth, where crannogs are entirely absent despite having suitable geography, raises an interesting aspect of wider social affinities in Northern Britain and the decision to adopt varying and distinct forms. In comparison to much of Scotland, the south west has languished in overall archaeological interest despite some encouraging recent exceptions (i.e. Cavers 2005; Poller 2005); overall, later prehistoric studies in the south west have concentrated upon crannogs to a large degree since the late 19th century. Another unique aspect of south west Scotland is the Roman interlude, however brief, which undoubtedly made an impact upon the lives of indigenous peoples in the first centuries AD in contrast to the 'uninterrupted' Iron Age in northern Scotland and Ireland. The composition of settlement types, including a small proportion of 'exotic' Atlantic forms (i.e. complex Atlantic roundhouses), and the aceramic nature of the south west indicates a similar insular development to the dynamic seen in the Western Isles, combining relative isolation (in this case from the eastern mainland) while receiving and transmitting influences and ideas via maritime routes in the Irish Sea Zone (Waddell 1992).

Chapter 4 is focused upon developments in Argyll during the first centuries AD into the Early Historic period until the ninth and tenth centuries, examining the evidence for the long running debate on a historical account of a Dál Riatic 'migration' from Ireland into Argyll. This debate is contemporary with the marked rise in crannog construction in Ireland and the decline seen archaeologically in Scotland and initially appears too coincidental to avoid investigation. This will be examined critically in light of relatively limited material assemblages which previously supported interpretations of the now controversial notion of a mass migration (Campbell 2001); instead suggesting a restructuring of political organisation across the Irish Sea. The analysis of island dwellings contributes to this study as the shift in construction is the most apparent aspect of change in the region during this period while also providing the source for much of the physical data. Continuing a narrative regarding re-use and changing meanings, the apparent decline in construction conversely does not signal decline in the use of existing sites as evidenced by Loch Glashan (Scott 1960; Crone and Campbell: 2005), Loch Seil and Ederline (Cavers & Henderson 2005). The proximity of crannogs to settlements associated with political centres such as Dunadd and Dunollie in Argyll can contribute to discussions of societal structuring and what role island dwellings may have served in the wider context of the first millennium AD in Scotland.

Chapter 5 examines the Outer Hebrides or Western Isles, which provides an element of contrast with the mainland. Due to the unique nature of Hebridean island dwellings, they are often widely excluded from discussions of mainland crannogs simply because they used stone instead of wood as a direct result of the largely tree-less environment after the Neolithic Period. However, the Hebrides are perhaps the ultimate embodiment of the desire to live on water - one which began in the Neolithic and has not entirely died out. Arguably, this unique environment has acted as an impediment to the incorporation of the Western Isles into the wider archaeological framework of settlement in Northern Britain. The maritime locale, separate from the mainland, has exposed the inhabitants to a different set of cultural influences than much of mainland Britain, creating in a sense a Hebridean society which developed on a separate trajectory, both receiving and transmitting a unique set of traditions, ideas and beliefs. These factors contribute towards making the Hebridean archaeological record unique in regards to much of the

British Isles in terms of material remains, burial practices and settlement forms. Beneficially, this region has seen comparatively little agricultural impact to the archaeological landscape, while the primary use of stone along with the encroachment of blanket peats in the hinterland, and sand along the western machairs[1], has further assisted preservation of human activity in and around lochs for five millennia. The proximity of island duns in this deforested region in relation to terrestrial settlement is readily visible archaeologically, and thus forms an ideal area for a landscape analysis. Detrimentally, the rampant pilfering of drystone structures in the Outer Hebrides for relatively recent building works in the past two centuries has eradicated vast amounts of evidence on island dwellings. When examining the notes of early investigators such as Erskine Beveridge (1911) or the RCAHMS (1928) against recent visits by the Ordnance Survey in the mid-1960s, it is clear that many prehistoric structures here have been completely obliterated unless their footings lie under accumulated peat deposits or if the site itself, such as Dun Borosdale, has become fully submerged. Chapter 6 relates fieldwork undertaken for this thesis in 2009 and 2010 on Lewis, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, Argyll and Sutherland, including locating several completely submerged sites and important finds of Hebridean pottery. Chapter 7 discusses the island dwelling tradition, and what might have motivated those who went to the great lengths to live on water, including symbolic and practical considerations, in light of the research within this thesis.

1.3 Interpretative and Theoretical Frameworks

1.3.1 Theoretical approaches: Why live on water?

'Islet archaeology' is an unusual sub-section within the wider archaeological community. Set within the context of human settlement forms, island dwellings, whether they are prehistoric Scottish examples or from the modern-day Uros in Lake Titicaca (fig. 1.4), represent an infinitesimally small portion of the archaeological record, while being equally distinctive. Therefore, the study of small occupied islets in Scotland, spread out over a large area of time and space, requires a largely unique approach to interpretative

[1]Machair refers to the sandy, low-lying land often forming an interface between peaty hinterland and the sea in the Western Isles. It predominates along the west coast, especially in the Uists, and is often the preferred location for agriculture due to the low acidity.

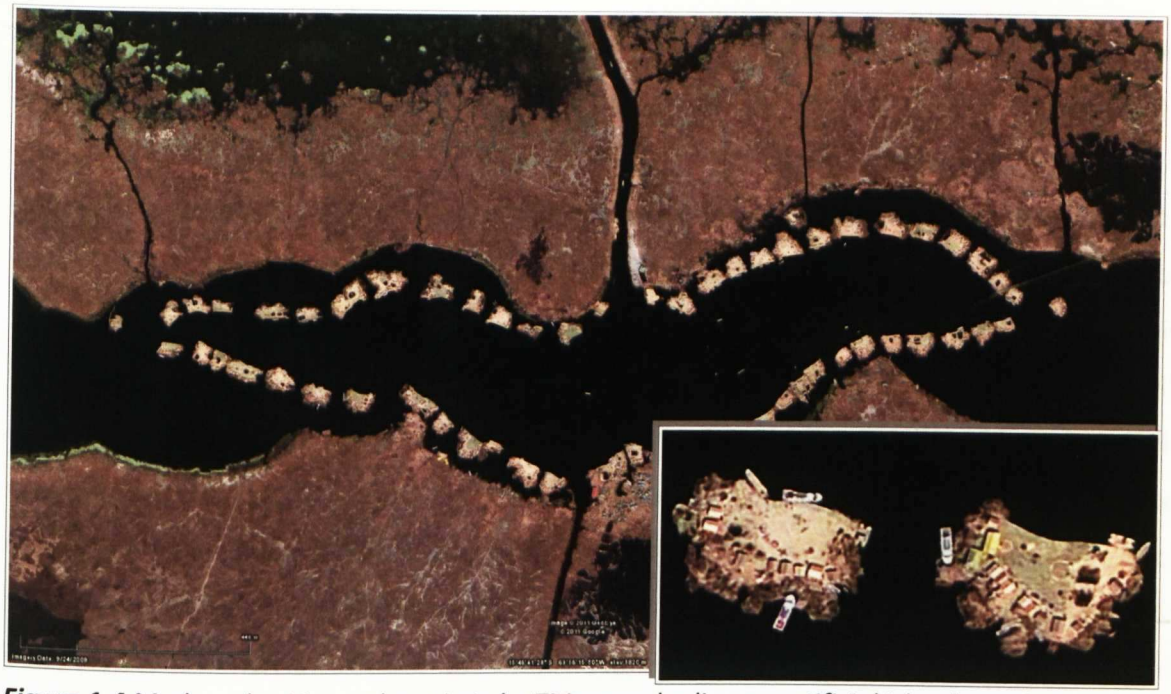


Figure 1.4 *Modern day Uros culture in Lake Titicaca who live on artificial islands made entirely of reeds. Although tourism plays a growing role in their economy, fishing and waterfowling have provided their sole means of subsistence for centuries.*

methods. Although an increased recognition of the importance of the island dwelling tradition in Scotland has evolved over the past 25 years, from a theoretical standpoint it remains sharply limited in scope and deeply rooted in traditional, empirical approaches which rely almost solely upon description, construction, measurements and to a lesser degree, location in the immediate landscape. Virtually no archaeological thought exists in regards to the underlying meaning or 'rationale' of occupied islets in Scotland beyond traditional interpretations as 'boltholes' or boundary markers. Indeed, this approach has remained largely unchanged since the mid-19th century, an unenviable position for Scottish archaeological studies in the current millennium. Besides the use of landscape archaeology (Morrison 1985; Cavers 2010) the only apparent Scottish applications of modern archaeological theory focussed upon islets exists in a recent article on crannogs (Henderson 2009) and Armit's examinations of Atlantic roundhouses, coincidentally as many happen to be on islets (Armit 1992; 1996; 1997). Meanwhile, Rennell took a phenomenological, 'experiential' approach to the later prehistoric landscape of the Western Isles which also discusses islets (2009). The Irish situation appears stronger in this regard, with Fredengren's lengthy treatise on islet use in Lough Gara taking a decidedly post-processual critique (2002), closely followed by a publication on Coolure Demense (O'Sullivan & Sands, 2007), Early Medieval crannogs (O'Sullivan 2009) and an

examination of temporal frameworks in wetland archaeology (O'Sullivan and Van de Noort 2007).

I have chosen to employ three distinct interpretative or theoretical approaches which complement rather than confuse one another. First, a landscape approach addresses distributions over a large area such as Scotland; this is especially important when discussing nodal locations and proximity to water-routes, both inland and offshore; this view in turn supports the third interpretative method introduced below. Although a landscape approach has been recently used by Cavers with notable results (2010), he focuses primarily upon Iron Age crannogs in the mainland south west and Argyll. The use here is extended to include the wider gamut of occupied islets, and examines the hitherto unrecognised role of watercraft for travel and communication within individual communities. A landscape approach is directly related to this study as the placement of lochs (i.e. suitable bodies of water) for settling or building islets is an obvious, though not sole, indicator of the distribution of occupied islets. The environment also influences the use of islets, through marginalisation of surrounding land and also through factors such as sea level change brought on by geological processes such as isostatic rebound. In the Western Isles, the landscape also heavily influences human action. With only two main materials (stone or peat) readily available for any free-standing structure since the Neolithic, the rationale for a distinctive Hebridean typology becomes apparent when set within a broader context of islet use in Scotland.

Secondly, this study is supplemented by a long-term *annales* approach which has been steadily restyled and restructured over the past decades (*cf* Braudel 1973). This framework examines the specific uses and changing meanings of occupied islets, while also allowing inferences towards change in social structures over a longer period of time (e.g. Bintliff 1991). Although a long-term approach may be considered outdated to an extent, in reality, it is still very much alive within current archaeological narratives (Bintliff 2004; O'Sullivan 2009; Bolender 2010). By examining continuity and change from this perspective, short-term, small-scale events such as crannog construction (dated through dendrochronology, for example) or references in historical chronicles can be set within the framework of medium-term events which can prompt change in the archaeological

record such as famine or the introduction of new technologies, and in turn, applied towards an examination of the *longue durée*, which extends over centuries or more (i.e. island dwelling use). This approach is crucial when examining a tradition that spans five millennia, and allows a meaningful transition across hard-standing chronological divisions which typically segment archaeological studies into arbitrary niches (*cf* Armit 1996).

Third, a theory of practice (Sillman 2001: 191) allows a discussion on why people actually wanted to live on small islets in the first place, a theme which has remained inexplicably undeveloped in Scottish studies. This question of 'why' is arguably the most central topic to island dwelling studies, as it examines the underlying rationale for the construction and use of structures on both natural and artificial islets. From a modern theoretical perspective, the current habit of simply acknowledging an underlying theme of monumentality, whether an 'island dun' in Lewis, or a timber and brush crannog in Dumfries and Galloway, leaves much to be desired when trying to understand the rationale for use. This examination of rationale is especially crucial in prehistory where cognitive approaches can provide a useful perspective on what is a still a poorly understood tradition. My approach in this thesis takes a different slant than works dealing mainly with ritual activity or 'symbols' (i.e. Marcus & Flannery 1994). My use revolves primarily around functionalistic interpretations which explore a wide range of motives ranging from ease of mobility along waterway to protection from wild animals, rodents and even the lowly midge. Defence, often touted as the primary driver behind islet use, plays no more than an equal role to any other interpretation in this thesis. Symbolism and ritual concerns, though often understood to be integral to the architecture of later prehistoric Scotland (Armit 1996) are discussed to a lesser extent when circumstantial material culture, such as metalwork or 'ritual' deposition, is present in the archaeological record.

This is not to say that ritual or symbolism is ignored here. Indeed, from a symbolic aspect, one of my core interpretations is that the use of small islets at *any* time in the past is analogous to either a modern stage production or an ancient drama in an amphitheatre. The prominent, exposed location of many islets meant all in the surrounding landscape could watch, often from a higher elevation, yet onlookers were hindered from simply

walking up and joining in the act, in both the physical and social sense. Continually morphing social dynamics saw island dwellings re-occupied over the centuries for reasons ranging from pragmatic concerns such as metalworking centres (Armit *et al.* 2008) to political assertion over those in the local landscape Raven 2005). The detail provided in the wetland record also indicates that phases of use may not be as lengthy as the wide span of radiocarbon determinations may suggest. Buiston is a clear example of this, with c. 2nd century abandonment followed by intense but brief (c.40 years) renewal and re-occupation starting c. 589AD (Crone 2000). This degree of chronological accuracy is entirely due to excellent wood preservation allowing the use of dendrochronology to narrowly define this secondary phase of activity (Crone 2000: 48; O'Sullivan & Van de Noort 2007: 70). Therefore, if use is not continuous on many sites, consideration must be given as to what motivated 'island dwellers' (as a discreet cultural group) to return to these watery surroundings and invest large amounts of effort into rehabilitating them.

1.3.2 Island dwelling rationale: Pragmatic versus 'opaque' factors

When discussing the possible rationale behind the island dwelling phenomenon, criteria such as defence, or location next to arable land have traditionally formed the primary factors. These are fundamental considerations yet surprisingly it was not until the mid-1980s that much thought was given to location (Morrison 1985). However, it remains important to avoid an over-reliance on these particular interpretations, while an inherent danger exists in relying upon modern ideologies which can create restrictive ways of interpreting why pre-modern societies, simply put, chose to do things a certain way (Tilley 1994; Fredengren 2002: 14). The idea of having more access to local resources simply does not provide a convincing argument alone for the task of building islands; living on the foreshore is much simpler and achieves the same end result. In the same manner, the application of 'defensive ratings' for brochs and island dwellings has little to offer as sites in question span the entire range of possibilities (Fojut 1982: 54; Holley 2000: 64). As historical accounts indicate, there are several ways aggressors could make life unbearable for island occupants without getting wet, ranging from flooding sites by simply blocking loch outlets to Post-Medieval examples of cannonades from the foreshore (O'Sullivan 2000: 41).

Despite being inherently difficult motives to assert, conceptual stimuli such as legitimacy via re-occupation, ritual activity, symbolism and status can nevertheless be considered key drivers behind the longevity of the island dwelling record. By incorporating these non-tangible factors into narratives regarding island dwellings, a more meaningful discussion of influences becomes available, yet it can also become proportionally more challenging to produce a compelling narrative. In the same regard, the ease at which the pragmatic factors such as defence behind islet use can be deconstructed alludes to deeper, underlying motives. To this end, the use of a site with an established life history, 'perhaps representing the deliberate re-activation of an antique site', carries with it an attached meaning by default (O'Sullivan & Van De Noort 2007: 71). For example, Dun an Sticer, North Uist see re-occupation during the Post-Medieval period by the insertion of a rectangular dwelling within a broch shell (*see* Ch.5 & RCAHMS 1928: 51). The new occupier, the son of Archibald 'the Clerk', sought a base from which to assert control over parts of North Uist during a period of inter-clan unrest after the murder of his father (Beveridge 1911: 140). It therefore becomes difficult to imagine that this individual chose Dun an Sticer to make his ill-fated move for control over the area without considering the historical implications behind this small islet. Abandoned sites that were reoccupied during the Early Historic and Medieval Period could therefore reinforce claims of ownership to the surrounding landscape by taking up residence in an ancient place whose attached oral traditions and memory were then transferred to the current occupiers.

In the context of prehistoric European societies, a reverence for watery places raises the very real possibility of a ritual significance intertwined with sites surrounded by water (Green 1995: 445). Applying this concept in combination with a shift towards domestic spaces for ritual activity after the Bronze Age, a ritualistic explanation for the appearance of ards or ard-like objects deposited in sub-flooring on crannogs such as Milton Loch, Buiston, Oakbank and Cults Loch becomes much more compelling (Henderson: 2009: 122). It is therefore rather surprising that ritual metalwork deposition is not found in greater quantity, or at least in more secure association with island dwellings, although this may simply reflect the lack of excavation of the surrounding lochbed. Sites such as the 'lochdar Complex', in the Western Isles, Dowalton Loch in the south west, several Inner Hebridean crannogs and perhaps most importantly, Duddingston Loch (Ch.4) have

produced evidence of metalwork deposition in association to the site, yet in many cases, it is near impossible to make a convincing correlation due to lack of provenance from antiquarian relict hunters and critically, evidence of contemporary islet occupation with the deposition event. The understandable priorities and finite excavation resources have focused upon crannog mounds themselves, not systematic searches for material culture around the margins of a given site. As an amnesty for archaeological relics in Ireland was called during the late 1980s, the appearance of objects discovered by underwater metal detectorists adjacent to crannogs further suggests a correlation between crannogs and ritual activity (O'Sullivan 1998: 42) yet this possibility has received very little attention in a Scottish context.

The perception of island dwellings as symbols of status, not only for the occupants but also for those involved with construction, can also be seen as influences in their creation. Concepts which depict crannogs as monumental objects (Armit 1997) or 'houses of strength' are likely intertwined with broader associations in a group context. The act of constructing an island in itself can be interpreted to incorporate additional meaning and importance within the wider community. As Parker Pearson comments: 'alliance building must have been a fundamental political and economic strategy' as members of the wider Hebridean community, for example, likely relied upon one another during times of difficulty or stress such as famine, pestilence or outside political pressure (2004: 206). Strengthening clan-based ties in this sense was certainly not restricted to the Hebrides; it can be viewed as a valid model of social interaction in marginal areas such as Western Scotland where group unity was a key element in survival. This notion of alliance building can be superimposed upon the act of constructing monumental places, forming bonds between small inter-dependent groups through the creation of long-lasting symbols of ancestry and legitimacy that are irrevocably intertwined with the occupants' own identities.

Longevity and tradition notwithstanding, environmental influences certainly dictate location, when changing water levels render a site impractical to live on, and what materials are available for construction or repair. An example of this dynamic can be found at Berigh, Riof, an Iron Age islet on Lewis that saw an initial phase of construction

in a loch surrounded by machair dunes, later to be covered by the development of encroaching blanket peats as the climate became progressively cooler and wetter in the Late Bronze Age (Harding & Gilmour 2000; Magny 1982). These environmental changes still played an important role in the site's history despite the most apparent phase of climatic change occurring prior to initial occupation (Harding and Gilmour 2000: 1, Ch. 4 below). Another Hebridean example is Eilean Domhnuill, which was extensively occupied in the Neolithic Period despite several extensive flooding episodes (Armit 2003a). As this indicates, environmental factors create substantial influences when examining the motives behind the use of sites in a watery context and cannot be ignored as overly deterministic. Anything beyond slight loch fluctuations can dramatically alter the viability of island dwellings, especially those situated in the Western Isles and Highlands where peat growth can block loch outlets, while inter-tidal sites are prone to tidal races and constant erosion.

1.4 Methodology

To examine the above considerations, this study will bring together the corpus of island sites in the RCAHMS inventory with recent surveys in the Inner Hebrides (Holley:2000), the South West Crannog Survey, or SWCS (Henderson *et al.* 2002, 2003, 2004), the Argyll Crannog Survey (Cavers 2005), the Ben Lawers Survey and the Perthshire Crannog Survey (Dixon 2005; 2006) and fieldwork in the Western Isles (Lenfert 2009; 2010; 2011, 2011a), to construct a fully informed interpretation of the use of island dwellings through time. This is also the first study to include the Western Isles, which contains rich and diverse evidence for island occupation, into a study of the mainland. Previous and current gazetteers (Oakley 1973; Armit 1992; Cavers 2005; RCAHMS 2009) have not accounted for the Western Isles and the mainland in a unified format; this has throttled a full analysis of the data by essentially ignoring fundamentally similar sites, i.e. island dwellings, due to differences in their physical composition and location, inhibiting the creation of a meaningful synthesis (*see* definitions p.16).

Toward this end, the construction of a dataset covering 571 islet sites now allows the opportunity to posit a clearer, more coherent understanding regarding the physical nature and geographical distribution of island dwellings in Scotland. Fundamentally, such

a dataset is necessary in order to help organise and understand the large number of typologically varying sites distributed over a large chronological and geographical span. The composition of this dataset includes modern and antiquarian excavation and survey reports, including unpublished 'grey literature', field surveys, RCAHMS collections material and historical notices. The current information from existing reports and notices has not been collated into a unified, coherent body of data for the whole of Scotland which can be used to examine the phenomena of island dwellings throughout their duration. Appendix 2 in this thesis contains completely revised ^{14}C data from Scottish island dwellings available at present (63 sites with 162 dates), with laboratory number, uncalibrated reading, deviation, context (where available), calibrated date to 2 sigma[2] in BC/AD format and years BP. This data was compiled using the latest calibration curve available through OxCal 2011. The ^{14}C data is then combined with existing historical references and artefactual dates to create the fullest available view of chronological activity on Scottish islets.

The Primary dataset contains 20 separate entries:

- The most commonly accepted name for a site (unless ambiguous)
- The location (council, parish, NGR and Longitude/Latitude)
- National Monuments Record Scotland Number (NMRS)
- If a site is considered 'lost', has it been obliterated or simply drained?
- Has it been surveyed?
- Excavation: when and to what extent (i.e. antiquarian or modern)?
- What is the surface area, and is this a 'usable' living area (i.e. platform)?
- To what degree is it artificial?
- What materials were used in constructing the islet, or parts of the islet?
- Does it have a causeway?
- If yes, what is the length of the causeway?
- Is there evidence for structures on the islet?

[2]2 sigma is preferred over 1 sigma in this thesis. The use of 1 sigma, or 'narrower' determinations may be more attractive to many archaeologists but the use of 2 sigma is more realistic when using statistical determinations.

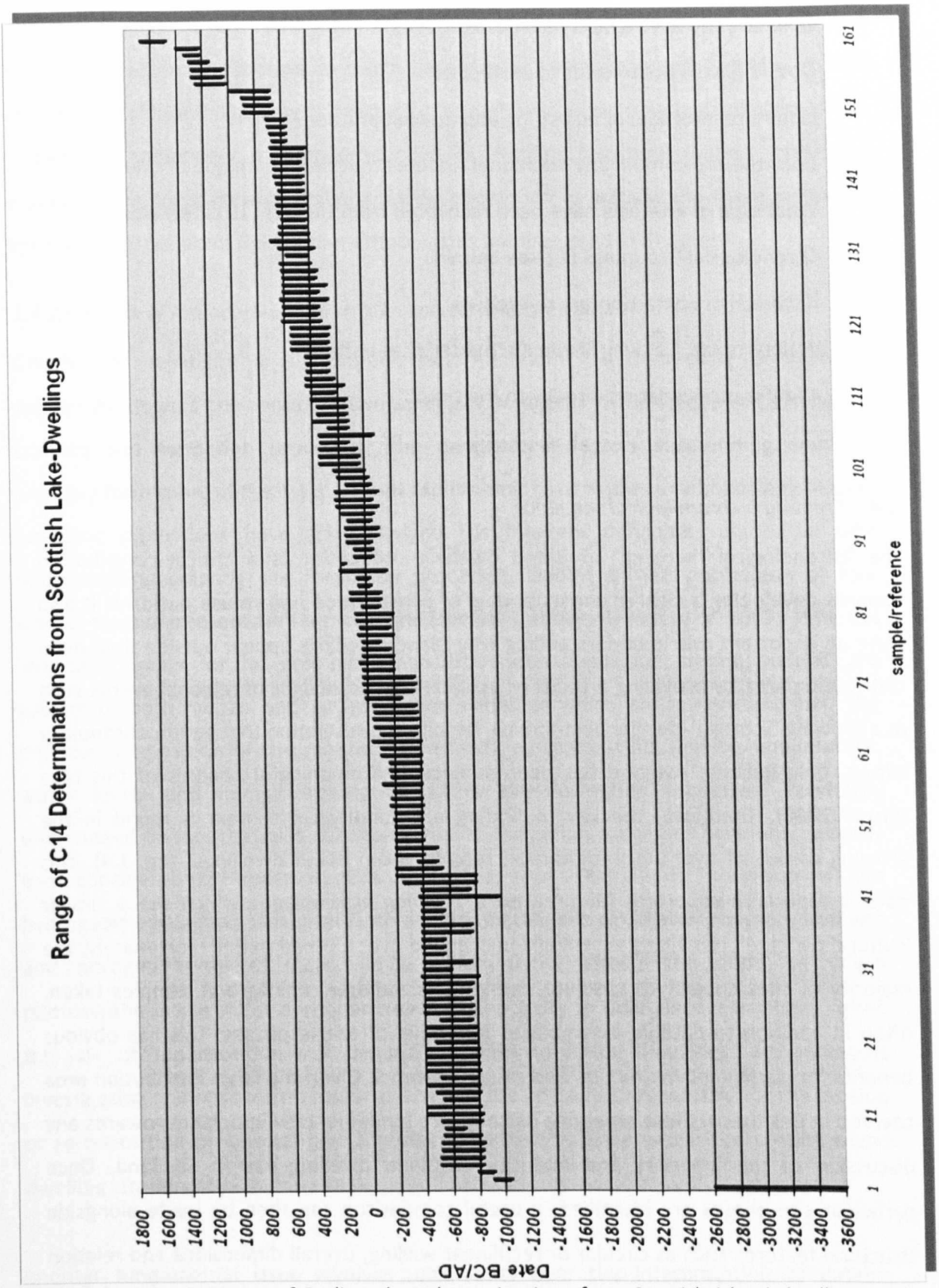


Figure 1.5 *Range of Radiocarbon determinations from Scottish island dwellings; date from Eilean Domhnuill (no.1) is based upon Neolithic Unstan ware (Armit 1987; 1988; 1990a; 1996; 2003b). Dun Vulan not included due to large amount of data-see Chapter 5 & Appendix 3.*

- Does the site have a boat naust or harbour?
- Does it have a breakwater to protect it?
- Is the site intertidal or lacustrine and at what altitude?
- Does the site contain any additional features that make it unique or unusual?
- What type of artefacts have been recovered from the site (10 categories)
- Chronological Groupings (12-see below)
- Historical or contemporary references
- Various notes, i.e. why I have discounted it as a site
- All references relating directly to the site

1.4.1 Creating a chronological sequence

The 'chronological mapping' of island dwelling occupation is a critical contribution towards developing a clearer understanding of construction and re-use patterns. It also plays an important role in understanding why island dwellings appear outside their main distribution area by providing a social or political context in light of regional events such as a growing 'Scottish' identity post-850AD. Despite the resolution that dendrochronology allows, only Buiston, Ayrshire has been subject to a meaningful analysis of this type (Crone 2000). Therefore, the key to finding a chronological context is found in the growing corpus of over 200 radiocarbon samples from island dwellings[3] (fig. 1.4). This data is especially important for prehistoric crannog assemblages which see a similar 'cultural package' remaining essentially unchanged over a broad period. Fortunately, the majority of sites subject to absolute dating have multiple radiocarbon samples taken, often in addition to datable assemblages indicative of re-use phases. This has obvious benefits for clarifying construction and re-use patterns. Given the large distribution area covered in this thesis, these emerging patterns are fundamentally important towards any discussion of the longevity and intensity of island dwelling use in Scotland. Once particular site phases are identified, a useful comparison can then be made alongside structural features such as circular or rectilinear walling, overall dimensions and relation to near-by terrestrial settlement morphologies. Accompanying this data, fieldwork consisting of inspection and survey will supplement the research by adding listings of

[3]The chart shows 161 radiocarbon determinations. 30 determinations from Dun Vulan, South Uist (Parker Pearson 1999) are discussed in Chapter 5.

physical dimensions and additional characteristics such as submerged features and causeways, which can provide a usable baseline for chronology and function. As the stratigraphy of island dwellings is constantly 'active' *(see below)* visual examination of the underwater component is often productive in revealing structural timbers, preserved organic layers, logboats and verifying if a suspected site is actually the result of human agency. More details of fieldwork methodologies are discussed in Chapter 4.

1.4.2 Caveats of radiocarbon and stratigraphical interpretation

Clearly, the reliability of radiocarbon determinations for unravelling occupational sequences requires due consideration, especially in regards to the unique complexities of crannog site formation processes. The depositional factors surrounding crannogs arguably form some of the most difficult taphonomic case studies in archaeology. Recent academic discussions have acknowledged the inherent difficulties associated with understanding crannog site formation processes, leading to the publication of four articles from one recent conference alone (*see* pg. 1 above; Barber *et al.* 2007). Whereas 'dry' sites remain, for the most part, undisturbed after deposition, crannog mounds are subject to both human and environmental variables which are in constant flux. The physical composition of the mound, wave fetch, currents, wind, gravity, temperature, water levels and human agency all affect site formation processes. Previously undiscussed factors that also contribute to site formation processes have only recently been considered (*cf* Henderson *et al.* 2003; Lillie, *et al.* 2008: 1886). This group includes hydrogeochemical and biological factors which dictate the pH, diatom, oxygen, sulphate and nitrogen levels of lochs, while water clarity affects the depth at which photosynthesis can occur and enable biological activity to take place. Essentially, while the law of superposition still *generally* applies to island dwellings, archaeologists investigating crannogs must remain aware that the processes responsible for the erosion or re-deposition of cultural layers remain an active variable when interpreting island dwelling stratigraphy.

Another fundamental issue involves uncertainty over the interpretation of datable material from archaeological contexts. The validity of initial construction or re-use interpretations ultimately depend upon what the excavator considers 'primary' and 'secondary' occupation. An example of this dilemma can be seen at Dun Vulan, South Uist

(*see* Ch. 5). Out of 32 radiocarbon determinations from this broch or 'complex Atlantic roundhouse', only one sample was considered indicative of the construction of the broch, while the rest were relegated to secondary or adjacent occupation by the excavators (Parker-Pearson & Sharples 1999:211). The sample in question is datable to at least four centuries after demonstrable site activity begins, and can be seen to disregard the possibility of much earlier construction for the broch (Cavers, G. and Henderson, J. *pers. comm).* Similarly, a similar issue exists here with radiocarbon samples obtained from structural timbers such as piles. There have been several cases where timbers that date beyond what are expected are subsequently interpreted as relict or ancient materials pressed into service for primary occupation or later repair sequences. After survey work at Loch nan Deala, Islay, a Mesolithic date was, rather surprisingly, returned for a structural timber embedded into the causeway. No excavation took place during the investigation although it was commented that the existing structural foundations were broadly similar to the Neolithic site of Eilean Domhnuill (Holley 2000: 203). In this instance, it is virtually impossible to comment with confidence unless further investigations and dating takes place. Perhaps a more contentious interpretation stems from Buiston, where several LBA/EIA dates (915-795 cal. BC, GU-2999 and 975-375 cal. BC, GU-2635) derived from two timbers, were soundly rejected as relict material despite one being a substantial worked timber (BU674) forming the core of the mound (Crone 2000: context F137, 14-15; 57). While crannog construction is well-documented in Scotland during the later prehistoric period, including Loch Avich, Oakbank, Redcastle, Cult's Loch I and Loch Leathan, the excavation report focused upon the Early Historic activity and subsequently dismissed this early yet entirely plausible set of dates (Crone 2000: 58). At the time of excavation (1989-1990), there were substantially fewer dates available for later prehistoric use which may have affected the interpretation at Buiston.

Adherence to general laws of stratigraphy can also be deceptive during crannog excavation as work at Ederline Crannog has indicated. Here, a sherd from a late 6th or 7th century AD E2 conical beaker was found in a sealed deposit almost a metre under the stone capping while a timber previously sampled atop the mound produced a later prehistoric date of 2320BP±45 (UB-2415) calibrated to 400-190 BC (Cavers & Henderson 2005: 282, 292). This was explained by erosion of the upper surface exposing older

timbers while later deposits were able to accumulate around the mound and were eventually sealed over(Cavers 2007: 248). Furthermore, sites in close proximity such as Dall North and Dall South in Loch Tay indicate that despite being smaller and more deeply submerged, a site may not necessarily be of greater antiquity. In this instance, the fully submerged Dall South returned an Early Historic radiocarbon determination versus a mid-Iron Age determination for the Dall North site (Dixon 2005: 259). Assumptions regarding size and depth relative to adjacent sites, therefore, cannot always be relied upon for relative or sequential dating. On a fundamental note, a low resolution 'flat spot' in the radiocarbon calibration between approximately 800 and 400 BC (Crone 1993: 245), is a matter that requires additional caution when interpreting ^{14}C samples from this important formative period in the island dwelling tradition.

1.4.3 Different approaches: dendrochronology and artefactual typologies

Although capable of unparalleled accuracy, dendrochronology plays a supporting role in Scottish prehistoric studies, limited in scope at present due to the Scottish oak chronology which stops around AD946. However, the Irish long chronology, extending to c.5289BC (Baillie 1995:36) can be applicable to areas of Scotland, primarily the south-west, due to the close geographical and environmental proximity, which theoretically provides similar growth patterns in oak (Crone 2000: 173). Irish crannog studies have undoubtedly reaped benefits as a result of the accuracy provided by dendrochronology, with at least seven crannogs precisely dated by the early 1990s (Baillie *et al.* 1983; Crone 1988; 1993). This method of analysis will increase the resolution of absolute dating considerably in the Scottish wetland record if its use is considered more fully in future fieldwork. A promising example is the chronology assembled from timbers at Whithorn Abbey in Galloway covering 250-750AD. This has clear benefits for an area of dense crannog distributions (Crone 1998:486), while Crone also has begun tentative work on a late Iron Age south-west sequence (Crone: *forthcoming*).

When examining trends over an area as diverse in nature as Scotland, interpretation of typologically datable artefacts is largely a by-product of the region in question. Pottery, the presence of which is perhaps taken for granted on many archaeological sites, is largely absent in prehistoric contexts from much of Atlantic Scotland (Henderson 2007:

171). The Hebrides and the Northern Isles are exceptions to this although even here, continuity of use is not always a given. While a typologically datable assemblage exists from Orkney and Shetland covering c.800-400BC, later stylistic sequences for the first millennium BC are not as self-evident (Armit 1990: 198-9). Conversely, much of the west coast typology is less clear and still hinges upon MacKie's work in 1974 at Dun Mor Vaul, Tiree which revealed large assemblages of decorated pottery. This has not changed to any degree despite close scrutiny of the available evidence (Topping 1985). Additionally, many Medieval and later fabrics and ceramic styles such as handmade cragganware are largely indistinguishable from one another due to a chronological currency extending to the mid-19th century. As Alan Lane wryly remarks on much of Scotland's ceramic tradition, it is 'either non-existent or depressingly undiagnostic' (1990: 108). In regards to a more 'typical' material assemblage from crannogs, querns appear in some abundance and can create a broad *terminus post- or ante quem*, namely the saddle to rotary quern 'transition' which occurs around 200BC (Caulfield 1978). Debate still exists as to how sudden this transition actually was. This raises the question whether the Northern Isles, where saddle querns are found in broch contexts, indicates either later saddle quern use or an earlier horizon for broch construction (Armit 1990: 191). This quandary illustrates the current limitations of typological dating in much of prehistoric Scotland, yet can still provide a baseline from which to construct a site analysis. Finally, this discussion must be tempered with the caveat that singular artefacts are actually indicative of occupation and not casual post-abandonment deposition.

Prehistoric assemblages on Scottish island dwellings are difficult at best to interpret, especially prior to the first centuries AD when Roman material begins to appear in the south west (Armit 1991: 190). Moving beyond pottery or querns, the amorphous nature of prehistoric material culture often consists of lithics such as rubbers or hammerstones, wooden domestic objects, and glass beads which also tend to be chronologically undiagnostic (Julian Henderson 1995:151). Implications of changing material assemblages in the south west after the Roman interlude hint at a diversification of island dwelling activity during the Early Historic Period; the reinterpretation of what was initially believed to be a leather jerkin as a possible book satchel for religious texts at Loch Glashan (Crone & Campbell 2005: 83) is of particular interest when looking at nodal points in the

changing meanings of island dwellings. It is argued throughout this thesis, however, that changes in material culture do not necessarily reflect a wholesale increase in occupant status on crannogs, rather it is merely a reflection of wider changes throughout society. The ability to construct and maintain a crannog, which can be viewed as a monumental task for an equally monumental dwelling, has more to say regarding occupant status than the presence of Roman goods, E-ware or evidence of metalwork, all of which can arrive in the depositional record by multifarious routes.

1.4.4 Discussion of chronological classifications

While it would certainly be possible to create new terminology and divisions for a study of island dwellings, here commonly employed terminology is used to avoid confusion. The arbitrary chronological divisions used in this thesis are as listed below while the 'cultural' divisions are listed afterwards:

Arbitrary Terminology:

- Neolithic 4000-2500 BC
- Early Bronze Age 2500-1200BC
- Late Bronze Age 1200-800BC
- Early Iron Age 800-400BC
- Middle Iron Age 400BC-100AD
- Late Iron Age 100-500 AD
- Early Historic/Medieval 500-800 AD
- Middle Medieval 800-1200 AD
- Late Medieval 1200-1542
- Post Medieval 1543-1745

'Cultural' or Regional Divisions

- Later Prehistoric Period 1000BC-AD500
- Roman Iron Age c.70-210AD
- Scottish 'Dark Age' 200-500AD
- 'Pictland' 297-850AD
- 'Dál Riata' 500-850AD
- Norse Period 800-1266

The section below briefly explains the chronological sequences and terminology used in this thesis. Additional consideration concerning the terms will be provided in the appropriate chapters in light of changing regional contexts. In order to define the above classifications, it is necessary to separate arbitrary chronological divisions from 'cultural' periods (i.e. the Roman Iron Age), as the Romans clearly did not have direct contact with a large percentage of Scottish inhabitants during the Roman interlude. To apply the term 'Roman Iron Age' to studies of the whole of Northern Britain is therefore vague and incorrect. Sections of this thesis, such as Chapter 2, deal specifically with the south west and the term will be used in this context when dealing with areas having appreciable Roman contact. Furthermore, while the occurrence of events such as Norse raids, invasions or migration beginning in the 9th century again form usable nodes to define time periods, they are not applicable to the full extent of the study area, in this case the bulk of the Scottish interior and the south east.

1.4.5 Arbitrary classifications of chronology

While debate surrounds the start of the Neolithic in Scotland (Kinnes 1985; Zvelebil 1992; Thomas 1991) for the purposes of this thesis the main site in discussion is Eilean Domhnuill on North Uist, which was occupied from approximately 3650-2600BC (Armit 2004:93; *see* Chapter 4). The Neolithic period typically marks the shift from a nomadic or at least hunter-gatherer subsistence pattern to a more settled, agrarian way of life across Europe yet the transition was, of course, not wholesale nor was it accompanied upon its arrival by a distinct cultural package across the diverse landscape of Scotland. As the Western Isles, with their ample evidence of Neolithic pottery and increasing reliance upon agriculture are the sole focus for a discussion of this period, it will be applied with this context in mind.

The Bronze Age overall will see relatively little discussion in this thesis due to the paucity of sites assignable with confidence to this period. With the exception of Melldalloch Island, Argyll (Rennie & Newell 2001), a natural islet, island dwellings appear from the entire corpus of existing evidence to be absent during this period. The Early Iron Age dates from sites such as Oakbank (Dixon 2004) and Redcastle (Hale 1994) tend to fall on the leading edge of the radiocarbon 'flatspot' mentioned above but do not pre-date

800BC with any real likelihood (Dixon *forthcoming).* However, this absence of mainland island dwelling use prior to the Iron Age deserves greater explanation than what is currently available. A lack of excavation and overall dating programmes can be cited as one major hurdle. However, if future work continues to indicate the early Iron Age as the true start of wholesale island dwelling use, consideration must be taken to explain why the Bronze Age lacks continuity with the Neolithic and the Iron Age in Western Scotland. With the amount of radiocarbon determinations from crannogs now available, the stark absence of reliable Bronze Age dates strongly suggests a true hiatus or indeed absence of island dwelling use on the mainland while Outer Hebridean sites represent the best possibility of discovery given the affinity for watery locations and under-representation in the Scottish excavation record.

While several publications have employed the term 'later prehistoric' (Armit 1992 *title*; Henderson 1998: 230) it is a vague term covering one and a half millennia, 1000BC-AD500; a period of tremendous change and variability in Scotland. Therefore, the term will be used only when discussing elements related to general trends in the west and north. It is with the onset of the Iron Age that we begin to see the full development and adoption of the island dwelling tradition in Scotland. The Early Iron Age (EIA) 800-400BC, witnesses the appearance of sites from Dumfries & Galloway in the south west (Milton Loch I: K02027: cal. 810-380BC), the Highlands, with no less than 9 possible sites in Loch Tay (Dixon 2005: 259; Appendix 4, below), and intertidal sites in the north east (Redcastle: GU-4542, cal. 840-520 BC; Carn Dubh: GU-2540, cal. 810-410 BC). The next phase, the Middle Iron Age (MIA) from 400BC to AD100, encapsulates the peak of monumentality in the domestic sphere, with the associated range of simple and complex Atlantic Roundhouses, or duns, brochs and wheelhouses which gain wide acceptance from Galloway to Shetland. Mainland crannogs also witness their floruit during this period as evidenced by the distribution of ^{14}C dates (*see* Appendix 4).

This period in turn is followed by the Late Iron Age (100-500AD), a term which finds varied acceptance in current literature, often being used in a Hebridean or far-northern context (Parker-Pearson & Sharples 1999) than for the whole of Scotland due to a longstanding predisposition for the application of Roman frameworks to Northern British

studies, yet it is widely understood that the Roman interlude did not have a long lasting effect upon the indigenous populace (Harding 2004: 155). While those who were in direct contact with Roman forays undoubtedly were swayed to adapt their lifestyles to varying, sometimes dramatic degrees, in the matter of three or four generations the Roman presence would only remain as a fading memory passed on in oral traditions. Instead, 100AD is chosen as a boundary for the transition into the Late Iron Age due to the combined factors of Roman contact in the south starting with Agricola (c.82AD) and the gradual decline of outward looking monumentality in the domestic sphere. It is during this transition that elaborate Atlantic roundhouse forms broadly give way to more elaborate internal configurations such as wheelhouses and 'aisled roundhouses'. While the concept of monumentality in Atlantic roundhouses appears to wane, the construction and use of crannogs, whether stone or timber, can be seen to persist as an outward expression of monumentality. The Late Iron Age also witnesses the literary (although not literal) birth of 'Pictland' as witnessed in the writings of Eumenius in 297AD (Cummings 1998; Laing & Laing 2001).

The Early Historic or Early Medieval Period sees the emergence of indigenous and Irish-influenced monastic texts stemming from areas such as Whithorn in Dumfries and Galloway and Iona in Argyll. This is also a nodal point in which the Dalriadic invasion or migration from Antrim is believed to have occurred from the obscure references provided by the *Annals of Tigernach* or the *Senchus Fer n-Alban* while these accounts have contributed much to the creation of a national identity at present, they hold little sway in the archaeological record. Here, indications of large scale migration are not visible between areas that were already in contact for a substantial period prior to this. In regards to island dwellings, sites such as Dowalton (Stuart 1865), Buiston (Crone 2000) and Loch Glashan (Scott 1960; Crone & Campbell 2005) show occupation or re-use during this period, after a hiatus closely following the 2nd century AD. This lapse or apparent hiatus has been noted by Crone (1993:246) and Cavers (2005:219) yet no one has examined the implications behind this in any detail (Ch. 2, below).

Advancing into the Middle (800-1200AD) and Late Medieval Periods (1200-1542AD), island dwelling use sees a sharp reduction in the number of radiocarbon determinations counter-balanced by an increase in historical notices towards the end of the latter. This

decline in use is most noticeable during the Norse interlude which coincides with the Middle Medieval Period. Once again, the exception to this is the Western Isles under the rule of the powerful Lords of the Isles, whose political control extended as far as Ulster. For a time this placed the Lords of the Isles in a position of influence and power second only to the highest nobility of Scotland and England. The end of the Medieval Period in Scotland is historically regarded as a tumultuous period of political and religious struggle. It officially is fixed by the ascension of Mary Queen of Scots to the throne (1542), which subsequently heralds the start of the Post-Medieval Period. Although diminished in use when compared to the Early Historic Period, sites such as Lochrutton in the south west (GU-2639, cal. 1060-1280 AD), investigated as part of the SWCS, Rubha Na Moine in Argyll, mentioned in two 14th century charters (Smith 1873:105) and Dun an Sticer, North Uist, testify to the continued widespread use of island dwellings throughout Atlantic Scotland during the Medieval Period.

The Post-Medieval Period, ending with the 1745 uprising, again sees a high degree of continuity in the island dwelling tradition throughout Scotland. At least 54 sites have either oral traditions, written references or artefactual evidence dating to this period (Appendix 3). The distribution during this period is as widespread as any preceding it, with sites ranging from Dumfries and Galloway (Loch Maberry, NX27 NE1) to Stoney Holm, Orkney (HY32NW 6) and the Western Isles (Dun Raouill, NF73 NE3). With the advent of what might be termed 'adventure travel', a number of early accounts of Scotland, the Western Isles in particular, were produced, providing a first-hand account of highland society from an outsider's view, both before and after the Jacobite uprisings and the Clearances. These events forever ended the clan system and a traditional way of life that had changed remarkably little for countless centuries. These writings began in 1549 with Dean Donald Munro's *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* followed by Martin Martin's 1695 account of the same name. These were joined in 1775 by Johnson's *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland*, a text which laments the passing of an ancient age and lost traditions in the wake of English repression. While there are several brief references to island dwellings throughout these texts, their real value lies within the numerous accounts of customs, beliefs, culture and rural life in Highland societies which

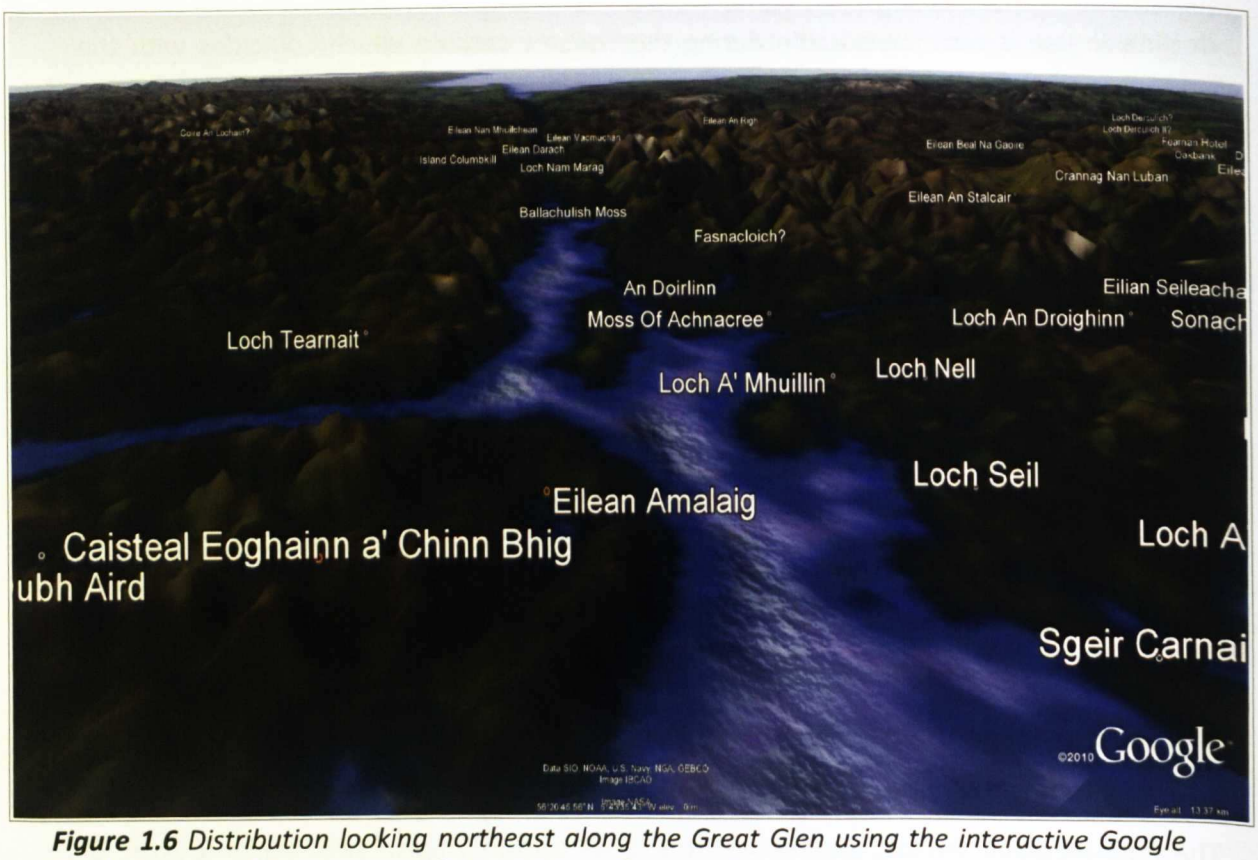


Figure 1.6 *Distribution looking northeast along the Great Glen using the interactive Google Earth database. There are an infinite amount of perspectives available with this resource.*

provides a direct ethnographic insight in which to consider the context of island dwellings in wider society.

1.4.6 Heightened public awareness of island dwellings

An additional result of this thesis is the creation of an interactive database in conjunction with the RCAHMS data and *Google Earth,* whereby it is now possible to access a complete online distribution map of island dwellings in their 3-D environment. Clicking on each site opens the RCAHMS data which includes general description and references. This database is intended for archaeologists, historians and students as well as the general public. It utilises Geographical Information Systems or 'GIS' technology in addition to satellite images and aerial photography, yet is much faster to access sites, has virtually no learning curve, and allows unconstrained movement through the terrain. The ability to view the landscape from infinite perspectives is thought-provoking in a way which traditional maps and even GIS itself cannot replicate; waterways and nodal points such as the Great Glen reveal how the wider landscape (not only lochs) influenced the placement of island dwellings (fig. 1.6). As an example of the usefulness of this programme, several 'lost' sites have been located using low level aerial photos while subsequently

highlighting anomalies not mentioned in the literature. One site in particular, Corie an Lochain (NH01 SW2), was reported to the RCAHMS by a hill-walker at 662m OD in a protected cirque overlooking the modern A82 near Glenshiel. I subsequently investigated the possible site in 2010 and found it to merely be a small natural outcrop in this highly unusual location. While this can be considered a 'negative' result, work of this nature serves to clarify the overall number and distribution of island dwellings. Another benefit of the database is the ability to verify exact co-ordinates using aerial photos as National Grid References provided to the RCAHMS can be vague with 2 or 4 number listings; the two number listing in particular leaves a one square km area in which to locate a site, and is not useful for other than plotting large scale maps (Cavers 2005:28). Finally, a number of suspected sites in the Western Isles have been marked for future investigation.

1.5 'How we arrived here': Past research and first-hand accounts: an overview 1791-Present

Several texts have discussed the history of mainland crannog research and excavation, yet Hebridean islet studies have only received scant inclusion despite their significance in the archaeological record (Morrison 1985; O'Sullivan 1998; Holley 2000; Dixon 2004). Given the lengthy span of island dwelling occupation and re-use, several accounts contemporaneous with, or shortly post-abandonment, were deposited in the *Old Statistical Account* of 1791-1799; this document remains important today as sites that had artificial features visible were recorded, albeit briefly. Oral histories and traditions in the *OSA* are often associated with island dwellings in many parts of Scotland which provide parallels for medieval and Post-medieval use of small islets while drainage works hint at artefactual evidence. These references in the *OSA* are based upon correspondence, personal interviews and public records dating back to the late seventeenth century. They are of obvious value as they not only give brief, tantalizing descriptions of the site, yet make mention of mortised beams, bronze artefacts such as swords, 'rude' pottery and "oak of the hardest kind" (Dixon 2004: 37; Munro 1882: 29). Clearly, it was the opinion of the witnesses that a significant number of these islets were artificial and ancient in nature. Given the practises at the time, many of the artefacts and structural features such as large timbers were lost; a logboat reportedly in excellent condition was destroyed in the Parish of Croy, Inverness-shire:

> *While draining the island by cutting a deep canal, oaks of gigantic size were found more than 20 feet below the surface, as sound as the day they were overwhelmed by water, sand, and gravel. At the same time a canoe of most beautiful workmanship was found, which some modern Goth has since cut down for mean and servile purposes (New Statistical Account, vol. xiv, p.448).*

The earliest mention of crannogs as sites of archaeological importance stems from Ireland when Sir W.R. Wilde began investigations at Lagore in County Meath (1840), and subsequently produced a catalogue for the Royal Irish Academy in which he listed some forty-six sites, the first compilation of island dwellings in the British Isles (Wilde 1857: 220-233). Thus the *crannoge* as it was formerly known in Irish came into the spotlight as antiquarians and scholars began an earnest study in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Across the Irish Sea, drainage of large numbers of Scottish lochs for farmland reclamation allowed curious individuals access to crannogs that were only recently submerged and inaccessible by standards of the time. Several early investigations by Grigor (1863) and a site compilation by John Stuart (1866) marked the beginning of efforts by Scottish antiquarians to assess these unusual features (Dixon 2004, 43). In the late 1870's Dr Robert Munro commenced investigations that would eventually take him to hundreds of lacustrine sites from Ireland and Scotland to Continental lakeside dwellings found in France, Germany and most notably, Switzerland.

1.5.1 Antiquarian enthusiasm: the 'Coming of Age' of wetland archaeology: 1864 -1920

Robert Munro's outstanding efforts, despite the overall technological infancy of archaeological investigation at the time, were vital in recording details of Scottish island dwellings that were being rapidly destroyed by improvement works and site deterioration. Prior to Munro's seminal 1882 *Ancient Scottish Island Dwellings*, the existing data was limited in nature dealing almost solely with basic empirical issues such as general dimensions rather than providing a detailed planview or profile of the site. Lack of stratigraphical interpretation plagued even the more proficient excavators prior to Munro. For example, the bronze dishes with Latin inscriptions recovered from Stuart's 1864 excavation at the Loch of Dowalton (1866) provided a broad *terminus post quem* but little else without a controlled understanding of stratigraphy which plays an especially crucial role in multi-phase sites such as crannogs. In light of the lack of dating

methods available in the mid-nineteenth century, absolute or otherwise, the data trail effectively disappeared when employing these methods.

Munro's analytical approach demonstrated an understanding that went beyond his contemporary counterparts who may have had the desire, but not the intuition (or perhaps financial ability) to treat the subject as thoroughly. Additionally, his understanding of the exceptional levels of preservation amongst waterlogged material is evident by mention that the processes involved 'cheat, as it were, Dame Nature out of her ordinary results" (Munro 1882, 2). Historical interpretations based on early Latin documents by Hippocrates and Herodotus on ancient island dwelling cultures such as the Phasis, in addition to ethnographic data from South America, Africa and New Guinea were also part of the exhaustive efforts undertaken by Munro to better understand comparative data. Journeys to *pfahlbauten,* or Continental lake-villages, gave rise to the idea that they were broadly counterparts to Scottish and Irish crannogs. Research throughout the 20th century has largely adopted the stance that *pfahlbauten* were most likely seasonal pile dwellings protected from occasional flooding and were chronologically and contextually detached from Scottish Iron Age sites. However, this perceived distinction plays an important part in definitions which are still debated today. The notion that Continental lake-villages were not constantly surrounded by water is highly debated and recent excavation in Switzerland strongly suggest otherwise (Zuoff: forthcoming). While early antiquarians realised the prehistoric origins of many crannogs, and their tremendous longevity, they could not assign a chronological context with any certainty beyond the recovered Romano-British assemblages or later brief historical references. It was widely accepted that excavated examples post-dated Swiss *Pfahlbauten,* but fundamentally our collective understanding of Scottish island dwellings remained static for a century.

Excavation methods during the course of Munro's fieldwork remained relatively unchanged from prior methods while drawings, artefact descriptions and structural analysis improved including the use of photography to document sites. However, Munro himself admits to shortcomings in methodology as his workers cleared a trench near a hearth at Lochlee, Ayrshire in 1878:

While this was being done we inspected the stuff as it was being removed, though I now regret this was not done more carefully, and found a great variety of manufactured implements of various materials" (Munro 1882, 77).

Another ultimately influential and prolific excavator was Erskine Beveridge, rarely mentioned in many treatments of Scottish prehistory. Beveridge dealt primarily with two largely untouched areas of 19th century archaeology: 'island duns' and the Western Isles. Erskine's summer home on Vallay, North Uist was his base from which to excavate island duns while publishing two works, one on Coll and Tiree (1903) and more importantly, the other on North Uist (1911). Beveridge noted some 60 'loch-forts' in North Uist; this number is still reflected in the RCAHMS records today and also as an unusually high number in GIS-based distribution maps (Cavers 2005, 55; Canmore 2009). Even today, the area near Beveridge's home remains one of the best archaeologically understood areas in the Western Isles due to his relentless excavations and surveys, a view shared by Armit (1996: 10). As with Munro, Beveridge passed away in 1920, effectively ending a seminal phase of survey and excavation on both the Scottish mainland and the Western Isles. However, despite the two being largely contemporaries who studied the exact same phenomenon at a time when archaeologist of their calibre were in the single digits, there exists no evidence that the two ever exchanged ideas or has communications. This irony mirrors the overall field of Scottish island dwelling studies as a conceptual divide between mainland and Hebridean sites which still exists today. One of my key aims in this thesis is to highlight this shortcoming and create a coherent record of island settlement in Scotland.

1.5.2 Hiatus and Revival: Into the present: 1920-

By the early twentieth century Munro was to embark upon a joint effort with Rev. Odo Blundell who had previously made several dives using a hardhat diving rig in Loch Ness. Blundell took a novel approach by using diving apparatus, and this effort marks the first time Scottish underwater investigations took place. Unfortunately, World War I saw Blundell leave for service with the Royal Navy as a chaplain not to return to archaeological investigations (Dixon 2004, 46-47). Furthermore, the pioneer Robert Munro passed away in 1920 after a significant contribution to the sciences and effectively ending a 'golden age' of initial crannog excavation. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the

Harvard expedition carried out several excavations at Lagore (1950) and Ballinderry (1937, 1942) which were to prove influential upon interpretations for decades to come. The period after 1920 saw little activity; somewhat cursory excavations at Lochend Loch in 1932 (Monteith 1937) did produce remains of two skeletons, which are scarcely found on island dwellings. James Ritchie excavated at Eadarloch, Loch Trieg in 1933 after drainage operations (1942) and exposed a multi-occupational site ranging from arguably late Iron Age deposits to post Medieval silver coinage from the reign of Mary Queen of Scots (*ibid:* 61).

The next significant advance in island dwelling archaeology occurred in the early 1950's when C.M. Piggot published the results of excavations at Milton Loch, Kircudbrightshire where two crannogs were exposed after loch drainage operations (1953). The interpretations from Milton Loch have persisted to influence successive publications on the topic, with the illustration of the 'classic crannog' house with a claw-shaped harbour appearing in overviews of crannogs (Morrison 1985: 19; Harding 2004: 72). The excavation suffered from rising water levels, a persistent issue on most crannogs that contain an unsubmerged element, and prevent a full excavation of structural features. Initial finds of a bronze loop assigned to the early centuries AD (Romano-British) were used to initially date the site while subsequent radiocarbon dating of both a wooden ard (K-1394; Lerche 1969) and structural pile containing 70 growth rings recovered by Duncan McArdle and dated in Copenhagen revealed a much older past than previously thought, around the 4th century BC (Guido 1974: 52-54). This finding was a hint of a developing stance regarding the placement of a crannog floruit in the mid to late centuries BC as available samples and dating methods improved. Nonetheless, a comprehensive overview of the site was recorded, and advanced the methods of recording from earlier work which was essentially of an antiquarian nature in detail and depth.

Loch Glashan in Argyll was drained in 1960 revealing a hitherto unknown crannog which prompted rescue excavations by J.G. Scott, resulting in a brief publication (Scott 1960) and an equally brief mention by the RCAHMS (1988, pp.205-208) until a comprehensive re-assessment was finally published in 2005 (Crone & Campbell). Despite this tortuous sequence of publication, Loch Glashan has developed into a notable example of an Early

Historic crannog, revealing numerous leather artefacts, brooches, wooden vessels, silver in glass beads, rotary querns, an iron axe, spindle whorls, imported E-ware, and numerous domestic items. While it is tempting to place this site among 'royal sites' due to the diversity of the assemblage, the location and contemporaneity with Dunadd instead suggests that this was a utilitarian site, a satellite within a larger settled landscape centred around the nearby seat of power (*see* Chapter 4; Crone & Campbell:122).

The use and increasing availability of SCUBA radically altered the ability to investigate submerged sites and was employed with great effect during the first major survey at Loch Awe by McArdle and McArdle in 1972[4] (1973; 2009). This project was successful in confirming no less than 20 crannogs in the loch. Loch Tay was subsequently surveyed in 1979 by Edinburgh University and members of the British Sub-Aqua Club (Dixon 1982) confirming the presence of 17 crannogs, seven of which were completely submerged. Full scale underwater excavation of a Scottish crannog did not begin until 1980 when work at Oakbank Crannog, Loch Tay began (Dixon 2004: 68). This long-term project was ultimately to become instrumental in raising public awareness while refining techniques in underwater crannog excavation. A final excavation report remains forthcoming, yet the excavation has fostered numerous individual research projects, most notably macro-plant analysis (Clapham 1988; Eadie 1991; Miller 1997), the development of tool signature analysis (Sands 1994), and the systematic use of dendrochronology, which is especially relevant to crannogs given the quantity of well-preserved timbers (Crone 1988). Subsequent survey work was undertaken by Jon Henderson in the island of Menteith (1998) situated north-east of Glasgow, a relatively small loch (2.64 km^3 surface area) in Stirlingshire which was a departure from the two large highland surveys. Two previously undiscovered crannogs were recorded along with two known sites, raising the issue of distribution given that four sites existed within a small loch and forwarded the notion that many more crannogs were in existence than previously thought.

Alex Hale (2004) carried out survey and excavation on another 'subset' of crannogs, that is marine crannogs located in the Beauly Firth, the Firth of Clyde and an anomalous

[4] The survey report was never fully published until an online version was made available in recent years. Therefore the reference will reflect the current website and is cited as a 2009 reference in addition to the earlier initial 1973 IJNA article.

marine islet, An Doirlinn, near the Isle of Eriska in Argyll. These marine sites had previously received scant archaeological attention with the exception of interest by Dr Robert Munro at Eriska (1885), also at Dumbuck on the Clyde (Bruce 1899) and by the 'diving priest' Rev. Odo Blundell in the Beauly Firth (1909; 1913). Radiocarbon dating during Hale's work returned some of the earliest dates for crannogs; the marine sites averaged radiocarbon determinations centring upon the middle Iron Age, c.300 BC (Hale 2004:18). With an air of caution it is possible that their maritime location suggests, if not an impetus to construct in water transmitted through sea or water-route contact, at least the *concept* of living on artificial islets. This 'water-route hypothesis' would be directly related to the way Hebridean sites developed, albeit over several millennia with a missing Bronze Age horizon. Another consistent aspect of mainland marine sites is the use of mortised timbers similar to many mainland sites, in some instances of quite substantial size (Hale 2004: 29) such as Old Kilpatrick on the Clyde, which would have supported heavy structural timbers which were clearly capable of withstanding constant tidal change and the associated loading and unloading as the waters receded and returned. Considering the early dates and maritime location for this subset, they deserve more consideration in the literature as their location places them in a prime setting for visiting seafarers to witness, returning with the concept of an 'artificial island' to their homes.

The South West Crannog Survey (SWCS) began to re-evaluate suspected sites and incorporated radiocarbon determinations into the overall data (Barber & Crone 1993; Crone 1993), while a substantial re-excavation regimen during 1989-90 was undertaken at Buiston Crannog, Ayrshire (Crone 2000), a fourteen week project but ten years in the publication. The results however, are arguably the most complete to date for any island dwelling in the British Isles, *sans* Dun Vulan, a former Hebridean islet (Parker Pearson & Sharples 1999, *see below*) and is an example of the results achievable from cross-collaborative efforts in wetland archaeology. Mark Holley published a survey of island duns in the Inner Hebrides (2000) many of which had never been examined in any detail; these results are discussed below. The past twenty years has seen a marked rise in research as momentum has gathered throughout Scotland, in not only chronological clarification, but also in the contextualisation of island dwellings with the overall

settlement record of prehistoric Scotland (Henderson 1998; 2000). New excavation strategies and the monitoring of environmental threats to site preservation have sustained the latest work, a continuation of the SWCS (Henderson 2003; Henderson & Cavers 2003; 2004) while Outer Hebridean island duns such as Dun Bharabhat, Cnip and Berigh, Riof were investigated as part of a University of Edinburgh initiative in the Western Isles, discussed below (Harding and Gilmour 2000; Harding and Dixon 2000).

1.6 Where things stand: The comprehension of island dwellings today

1.6.1 Changing approaches to wetland archaeology

The expansive geographical distribution and chronology of island dwellings has acted as more of an impediment to studies in the past century than a boon (Henderson 1998: 233), as the bewildering array of site-types were difficult to synthesise alongside terrestrial settlements given the poorly developed understanding of chronology and use. As excavation and analysis using radiocarbon or dendrochronological methods are a relatively recent development in island dwelling studies, this variation has impeded assimilation into overall studies of settlement archaeology in the British Isles until a resurgence of academic interest in recent decades (Guido 1974; Dixon 1981; Morrison 1985; Crone 1988, 1993, 1998, 2000; Crone & Campbell 2005; Hale 1994; Harding 2000; Henderson 1998; Parker Pearson and Sharples 1999; Henderson *et al.* 2002, 2003, 2006). Therefore, the prior uncertainty of island dwelling dates during the formative late 19th and early 20th centuries of Scottish archaeology has traditionally exempted them from anything other than a brief mention in core treatises of Scottish and Irish archaeology. Researchers during these years were generally unable to comment on age with any more than a vague single-phase assessment at a given site based upon typological artefacts, i.e. lithics, pottery, querns, dress fasteners, Roman artefacts and metal implements (Munro 1882; Blundell 1910, 1913; C.M. Piggot 1953; Scott 1960; Feachem 1965; S. Piggot 1966).

Formerly relegated to a portmanteau of unquantifiable forms within the overall archaeological record, the emergence of island dwellings as a major element of the settlement record in Western Scotland is now widely recognised by scholars of the later prehistoric/Early Historic Period (Harding 2004, Cavers 2005, Poller 2005; Raven 2005). Given that artefactual assemblages and burials are sparsely accounted for during much of

this period in comparison to southern Britain, the archaeological community is heavily reliant upon settlement studies in Atlantic Scotland and Iron Age Ireland (Armit 1990, 1996; Raftery 1994; O'Sullivan 1998; Harding 2004; Cavers 2006; Henderson 2007; MacKie 2007). Within this settlement focus, island dwellings comprise a substantial component due to differential survival rates compared to terrestrial sites, largely protected from agricultural and mechanical disturbances, while their physical location places the majority outside the reach of casual visitors; indeed many islet which are noted by the RCAHMS were not visited due to inaccessibility (NMRS 2010).

In particular, since the mid-1980s island dwelling studies have enjoyed a steady revival in both Scotland and Ireland after an initial phase of antiquarian interest during the mid 19th-century evident by well-publicised Continental investigations of Swiss sites which attracted considerable public attention (Keller 1866). The current 're-awakening' is due to a number of factors, most notably the recognition that island dwelling studies had steadily fallen behind in terms of incorporation into terrestrial site studies, thus providing a research subject essentially ripe for an influx of new theoretical and methodological approaches (Morrison 1985; Crone 1993, 2000; Dixon 1981; 2004; Redknap *et al.* 1994; Henderson 1998; O'Sullivan 1998; Fredengren 2002; Cavers 2005). The methodology has developed remarkably since then, although modern theoretical aspects have largely been ignored (below). Another realisation is that island dwelling studies, as a sub-set of wetland archaeology in general, has much to contribute towards 'mainstream' archaeology (Van de Noort & O'Sullivan 2006: 13; Henderson 2007a: 240). This attitude holds particular relevance for those willing to carry out underwater survey and excavation, often under potentially hazardous and typically uncomfortable circumstances. Once in the water, divers can face unpleasant underwater conditions[5] with little to no visibility, and bone-numbing temperatures year-round as Scottish lochs typically average 1-2 degrees C colder than the North Atlantic.

However, the high preservation of waterlogged strata provides excellent synchronic snapshots of site activity through instantaneous events such as axe-marks on worked timbers or seasonal use through paleoenvironmental evidence (Dixon 2004). Yet a

[5]This is not always the case as intertidal Hebridean sites can have excellent visibility near white sand beaches while sites in agriculturally productive mainland areas are perhaps the least pleasant largely due to nitrate run-off.

diachronic view is also well represented in island dwelling archaeology, with superimposed layers of sealed deposits providing ample evidence of long-term site use. In this sense, it is perhaps difficult to resist a view of both crannogs and their occupants as unchanging and static, 'timeless, living outside the forces of historical, social and cultural change' (O'Sullivan & Van de Noort 2007: 67). While key elements of this 'static' view withstand scrutiny on a broad level, e.g. almost imperceptibly changing prehistoric assemblages, research in this thesis indicates that although many sites were repeatedly abandoned and re-used, from an *annaliste* viewpoint, these phases of re-use represent the ever-changing social dynamics set into motion, expressed and acted out upon these small islets.

1.6.2 A brief biography of island dwellings

While a lengthy chronology and widespread distribution for island dwellings is well established, the Neolithic date from Eilean Domhnuill (*see* Ch. 5 & Armit 2003a: 93) currently remains an anomaly in that no further island construction, or indeed occupation, has been discovered thus far for some one and a half millennia in Scotland. However, it remains highly probable that sites constructed during this period await discovery while natural islets such as Eilean an Tighe and Pygmies Isles in the Hebrides have produced Neolithic pottery (MacKenzie 1905). Indeed, in regards to chronological origins, the partial excavation of occupied islets can be misleading as the lower stratum is often not reached. Concerning useful diagnostic artefacts, the prehistoric assemblage is frequently limited in scope, and therefore unhelpful, as lithics and wooden implements were common in a mainland context until at least the Early Historic Period. This is evident at Loch Glashan where pounders and hammerstones formed a large part of the assemblage (Crone & Campbell 2005: 105). Therefore we are left almost solely with pottery in the Western Isles, the transition from saddle to rotary querns (rather broad) or radiocarbon determinations to provide a chronological context for prehistoric islets.

Following Eilean Domhnuill, the excavations at Melldalloch Island, Argyll (Rennie and Newall 2001) indicate the construction on this natural island of a palisade radiocarbon dated the late second/early first millennium BC, closely followed by a roundhouse, while no less than 22 sites have radiocarbon determinations prior to 390BC (Appendix 2).

However, within the overall range of time and space, the chronology and distribution most consistently ranges between approximately 400BC-400AD in Atlantic Scotland, when island dwelling construction activity appears to have reached a zenith based upon available radiocarbon evidence for primary structural material (Dixon 1981; Crone 1993; Henderson 1998; Harding 2000; Cavers 2006). In Ireland the evidence indicates a floruit centred around the Early Historic Period after 500AD throughout the Drumlin Belt; therefore 'the crannog is seen primarily [in Ireland] as an Early Christian period type, the wetland equivalent to and contemporary of raths and cashels' (Donnelly 1997: 70).

1.6.3 Notes on the distribution and re-use of occupied islets

This somewhat confident view of crannog function is rather more ambiguous in Scotland, especially during later prehistory while the Irish evidence is increasingly providing examples of Iron Age use. The picture in Scotland is also increasingly complex in regards to distributions when one considers the true extent of islet use. Currently, the distribution in Scotland is seen to favour the western seaboard as an 'Atlantic' phenomenon largely avoided east of the *Druim Albin* or Grampian Highlands (Cavers 2010: 11). However, a look at the total distributions of occupied islets, not simply 'crannogs' (fig. 1.1) indicates a much more complex distribution, with greater numbers in eastern Scotland that existing reports allude to (*ibid* : 66). This distribution also extends now to Shetland, where Castle Holm and the Loch of Brindister represent the use of islets. This indicates the restricted usefulness of crannog studies which largely ignore the presence of some 200 additional small, occupied islets throughout Scotland.

The motivations behind the rehabilitation of sites, even after lengthy periods of apparent abandonment, indicate a willingness to invest in marginal areas that require constant maintenance. This is typified in examples such as Barean Loch, where two radiocarbon determinations from structural piles are available. The first, 380-40 cal. BC (GU-2642) and the second at 650-880 cal. AD (GU-2641), demonstrate either continuous occupation or a possible hiatus of roughly seven centuries. In reality, the site likely witnessed use between this period, perhaps in a seasonal manner. Redcastle, in the Beauly Firth, has returned radiocarbon determinations ranging from 840-520 cal. BC (GU-4542) to 74-444 cal. AD (Beta 48764), which demonstrates a remarkably wide chronology for a site

considered to be restricted to the Early Iron Age (Hale 2004; Cavers 2006 61, 392). It is also at Redcastle that the latest documentary evidence, albeit brief, is indicated by use as a refuge after the 1745 uprising (MacLagan 1875: 89; Hale 2004: 158) The fact that it is built in an inter-tidal location, subject to extremes in water fluctuation, only reinforces the concept of persistence and longevity when considering site survival in this estuarine environment. Re-use or continued occupation over substantial periods of time is again shown at Eilean Ban, Mull, and Loch Arthur, Kirkcudbrightshire, which both indicate Medieval use yet have returned Iron Age radiocarbon determinations at 400-100 cal. BC (Beta-78832) and 410-160 cal. BC (GU-2644) respectively from primary structural piles (Williams 1971; Holley & Ralston 1995).

In fact, no site to date has indicated a single period of use when full excavation techniques have exposed occupational sequences or material assemblages; evidence squarely indicates that crannogs are constantly used and re-used over multiple periods (Cavers 2007: 247; Henderson 2007: 238). At Ederline Boathouse in Loch Awe, Argyll, the radiocarbon determinations for structural piles indicated an Iron Age horizon for the site around 2320BP±45 (UB-2415) yet recent excavation revealed imported E-ware with a limited production around the late 6^{th}-7^{th} centuries AD providing clear evidence of continued interest in living on Ederline, however intermittent, over approximately one millennium (Cavers and Henderson 2005: 295). Considering that it is a small artificial islet constructed with stone and timber in the third largest loch in Scotland (3800ha^2), it is apparent that other factors besides environmental influences were responsible for the decision to maintain the site over the ensuing centuries. This continued interest pre-supposes a tangible, longstanding degree of attachment to the area: 'it was seldom efficiency and practicality that were the motivating forces behind Iron Age construction' (Cavers 2006: 15). The location of Ederline in such a large loch would have subjected it to a considerable battering from the elements, especially wave fetch, and likely would have required constant upkeep to remain a viable habitat. The comprehension of antiquity at Ederline to later occupants is difficult to gauge although it is conceivable that oral traditions or place names played an important role towards an understanding of the site's longevity and ancestry.

One aspect of crannog re-use that deserves acknowledgement is the fact that once the core component is laid out such as the timber, stone or brush, maintenance of the site requires substantially less effort, even after centuries of disuse, which can be viewed in terms of 'cost versus labour'. Testimony to this exists today when one considers the number of island dwellings that still survive above the loch level. The thick vegetation which commonly covers these sites helps to consolidate the mass and prevents the core from shifting while waterlogged timber piles remain functional and prevent the mass from slumping. Therefore, a site that has 'only' been abandoned for several centuries could become readied again with a brief but intense session of repair. As driving new piles into stone mounds is impractical, if not impossible, new upkeep would likely take the form of additional stone or outward expansion past existing margins where timbers could be readily inserted (*cf* Harding 2000: 305) In this manner, abandoned islets may be re-inhabited relatively easily in comparison to their initial requirement of materials and labour. In cases where this was not practical for the builders' intentions, another suitable location would be necessary.

Existing crannogs could be readied during times of unrest as convenient retreats should the need arise, whether as a result of internal or localised unrest or as a by-product of larger external events. This raises the validity of status if an abandoned site was effectively taken over by organised squatters and rehabilitated. As this is rather unlikely to have gone unnoticed given the visibility of island dwellings in the landscape, this implies that re-use was controlled by lairds who in turn let land to new occupants. In prehistory, crannog dwellers perhaps formed the forerunners of Medieval 'tacksmen', a middle class of what may be loosely called 'property managers' who are known to have occupied island dwellings. The tacksman's role in the middle echelons of society was an important means of both control and maintenance of a hierarchy between a much larger underclass and the ruling elite or lairds (Raven 2005:235). With lairds often owning vast estates, especially in the 17th and early 18th centuries (i.e. pre-clearances), intermediary tacksmen, who in turn let out smaller parcels of land to the majority, were an important tool for maintaining control over a dispersed community the laird himself may never meet in person. It is in this potentially volatile position that tacksmen would find both status and exclusivity living on islets. Whatever the underlying factors for re-use may be,

the number of sites indicating multiple phase occupation points out a preference for effectively 'recycling' a crannog rather than building anew. While this could be attributed to economic reasons on a base level, in a very real sense future occupants could maintain a physical connection with the past, rather than live on a new site without any past narrative or credibility.

1.6.4 Modern Perceptions of Ancient Places

Given that island dwellings have persisted in Atlantic Scotland for five millennia it is argued here that they are as much a part of a collective memory and identity of those who lived on or near lochs over time as they are part of the physical landscape. Today, local inhabitants[6] who realise that the unassuming islets or seasonally submerged cairns in their local lochs are the remains of artificial islands or 'ancient dwellings' may view them as somewhat puzzling, perhaps mysterious entities. Crannogs can be easily overlooked with walkers or passers-by often unaware that many of the small islets found throughout the Scottish landscape were once bustling centres of activity closely connected to the surrounding landscape and ultimately the climate. Island dwellings today may also appear as inconsequential and overly laborious locations where one would decide to construct not only a house, but literally the ground upon which it rests - an island in this instance. A sense of ephemerality is balanced by the recognition that the 'place' still exists, even if dilapidated and overgrown or only sporadically visible below the surface. This view tends to foster a feeling of detachment that contradicts a natural instinct to view an 'ancient place' as part of an inherited individual and national identity, while systematically retaining an aspect that remains alien in that the use and meaning of the crannog or island dwelling can perhaps never be fully reconciled or understood. The symbolic view of island dwellings as remnants of the past is easily applicable to places of antiquity that are in disuse or decaying.

[6] This is based upon personal communication with numerous Scottish and Irish residents over the past seven years, crannogs simply are not a commonly recognised subject to many people. This is not to imply ignorance; rather crannogs have received relatively little attention in the general media despite being featured on popular television programmes such as *Time Team* in addition to working reconstructions such as the Scottish Crannog Centre in Perthshire, Scotland, Craggaunowen in Co. Clare and the Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford, Ireland.

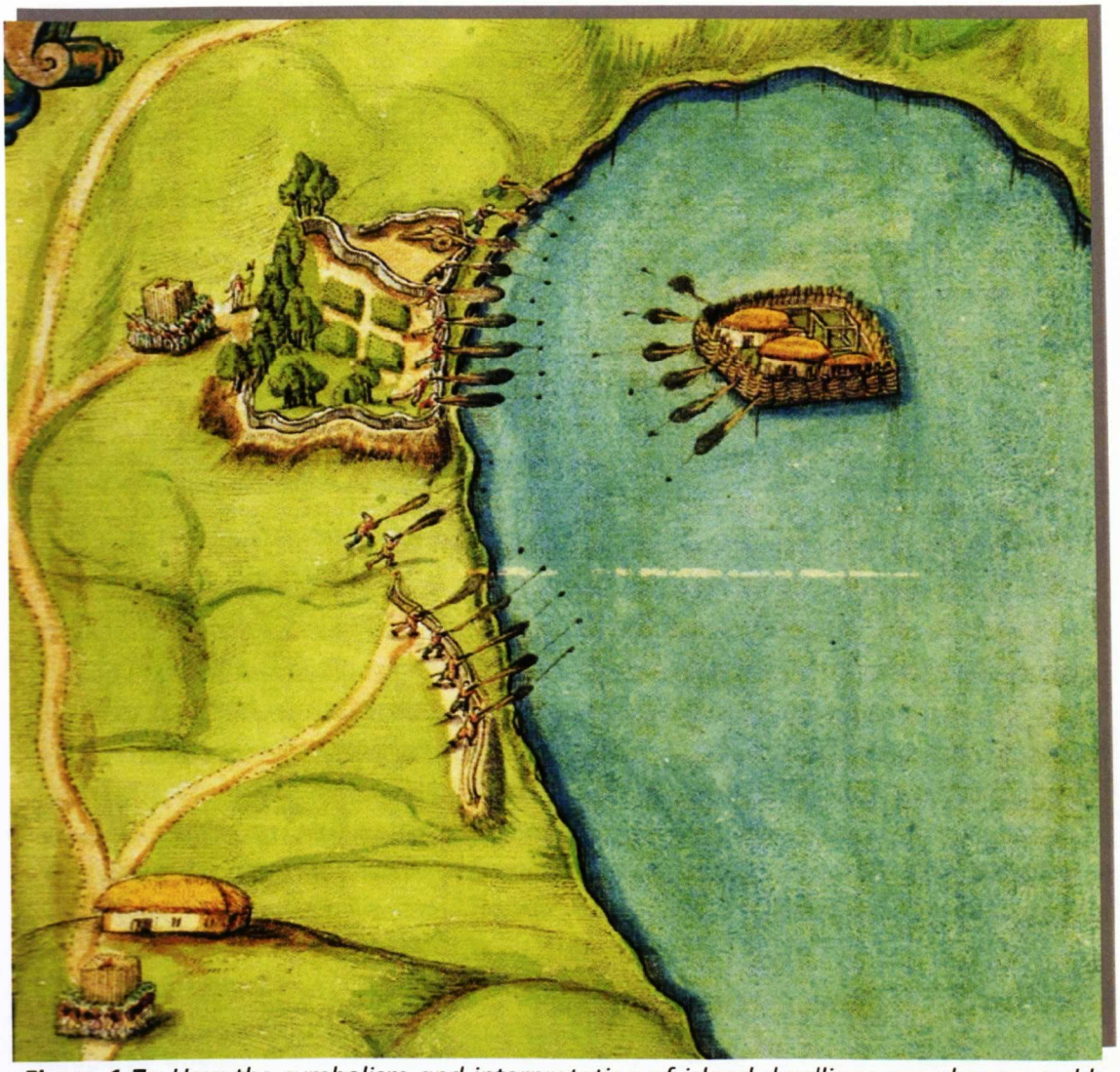


Figure 1.7a *How the symbolism and interpretation of island dwellings can change; noble chiefs and their stronghold or merely rebel rousers backed into a corner? Irish under attack from British forces c. 1602 (Richard Bartlett; National Museum of Ireland).*

The symbolism of a particular object need not remain static, and it is argued that the *meaning* of island dwellings has recognisably changed over time, as island dwellings have interchangeably served as localised refuges and homesteads, or larger, highly elaborate monuments conspicuous in the landscape, centres of political power or resistance, workshops of skilled artisans or as abandoned, overgrown islets visible today. This interpretation of the meaning of island dwellings closely follows a 'structured system of functional inter-relationships' which broadly implies more tangible aspects such as environment, deposition, organisation and economy while a second meaning, 'the structured content of ideas and symbols' (Hodder 1999: 124) expands upon the former to attempt an understanding of an implied symbolic function. Beyond the empirical

Figure 1.7b *Symbolism revisited; Antiquated Irish island-settlements in a passing, relict landscape contrasted with the unveiling of a modern Ireland, replete with new roadways next to the ruins of an old Irish church c.1602 (Richard Bartlett; National Museum of Ireland).*

depiction the crannog under siege in 17th century Ireland (fig. 1.7a) can be seen to represent the determination of native Irish to repel invaders while the second depiction (fig. 1.7b) shows island dwellings in an isolated landscape being superimposed with a new, more modern Ireland. While this post-medieval analogy appears far-removed from a prehistoric discussion with improvements such as roadways passing an Irish church that now lay in ruins, it serves as an example of first hand illustration to convey the concept of changing symbolism and meanings which are an on-going theme throughout the thesis.

One need not look more than three or four centuries into the past to see island dwellings as 'living and breathing' sites, a relatively recent period on an archaeological scale. The entire suite of island dwellings were not only homes, farmsteads, workshops, council meeting areas or defended 'places of strength', but outright symbols of persistence and continuity that spoke for themselves in the same manner imparted by any monumental dwelling, whether it is a prehistoric broch such as Mousa in the Shetlands, or a Medieval site such as Stryker Castle in Argyll. Despite recent improvements in academic

perceptions of island dwellings regarding both their lengthy chronology and implications of presence and power especially from the Early Historic Period onwards, island dwellings remain understudied and therefore largely unincorporated in relation to the complex suite of terrestrial sites such as Atlantic roundhouses, promontory forts, roundhouses, hillforts and hut circles. As a result, they are often overlooked as productive avenues of insight into the past societies of Scotland and Ireland, a point that has finally received growing considerable in the past decade (Harding 2000:301; Poller 2005:140-143; Cavers 2006:17; Henderson 1998: 2007:231). As this imbalance in research has begun to be redressed, it becomes increasingly clear that island dwellings were an intrinsic part of daily life for many inhabitants throughout Atlantic Scotland and Ireland.

Chapter 2

On Classifying Scottish Island Dwellings: Reappraisal and Restructuring

2.1 Defining the data: Island dwellings in the British Isles

2.1.1. Introduction

This chapter examines current issues with island dwelling definitions and classification, primarily in the NMRS database (i.e. Canmore) which divides the fundamental theme of living on water into isolated classificatory niches. It also discusses how these issues developed and why all islet-based sites should be reconsidered under a unified framework. When examining the wide range of existing definitions and classifications in this chapter, a critical review of past theoretical and interpretative approaches behind the categorisations of occupied islets illustrates both the overlap and disparity within the archaeological record. This ambiguity highlights the need for a coherent understanding of particular islet-based typologies in Scotland in order to facilitate meaningful discussions on function or meaning. This chapter also reveals how archaeologists have typically approached the study of island dwellings in a restricted manner by concentrating on architectural or structural minutiae, rather than considering the implications behind choosing to live on an islet. *Why* people decided to live on islets is every bit as important as *how* they did so, especially in regards to themes on long-term continuity and change which cover several millennia.

One might ask: 'why do island dwellings need be given a specific classificatory niche if they differ greatly in chronology and form?' Furthermore, does it make a useful archaeological contribution to highlight islet-based sites from their often identical terrestrial relations? The answer, demonstrated in this thesis, is yes. Living on water brings with it a number of distinct conceptual differences which fundamentally separate the rationale between otherwise physically similar forms on land, including image, status, exclusiveness, transport, subsistence strategies and of course, an element of defence. A roundhouse in the middle of a loch may look the same as a roundhouse on top of a hill, but the underlying function and meaning are very different. First however, a look at the development of definitions is useful.

2.1.2 The use of the term 'crannog' versus historical alternatives for 'island dwellings'

61% of island dwellings in Scotland are currently referred to as crannogs, making them the most substantial element in the island dwelling record. Several scholars have provided etymological background to the term 'crannog' (Munro 1882: 10; Morrison 1985:16; Fredengren 2002:4; Dixon 2004: 37). It is widely acknowledged that the Gaelic root *crann-* refers to wood but uncertainty remains if this refers to the island itself, any associated buildings or even causeway or harbour (Morrison 1985:26) while Fredengren considers crannog to mean a 'young tree' in Irish Gaelic (2002:4) The word *crannag,* the correct spelling in Scots Gaelic, can also refer to various wooden objects such as tools, furniture or nautical fixings. Most importantly however, artificial islands themselves were historically referred to by a number of indigenous terms in either Highland Gaelic or Lowland Scots. In reference to alternative expressions for island dwellings Morrison again remarks:

> *They were commonly referred to then by words simply meaning 'island', such as Insula, Eilean, Island, Isle/Ysle/Ylle, irrespective of how natural or unnatural they might be (1985: 27).*

To the above we can add *Elan, Sgeir, Carn, Crannaig and Inch;* all terms which have been used to name or refer to small islets. Elan and Crannaig are obvious derivations of *eilean* and *crannog*; Carn refers to a 'cairn' while Sgeir would be a Gaelicised version of the old Norse 'sker' or plural 'skerries' which commonly refers to a rocky islet or navigational hazard. *Inch* also appears in several island place-names such as Inchmahone or Inch Talla in the Lake of Menteith and appears to be more closely applied to lowland or eastern sites such as Saint Margaret's Inch in Angus. Morrison's realisation that historical terms were largely inconsequential to artificiality underscores a key issue which has only become problematic in the past 30 years as researchers have struggled with (or ignored) a solitary conceptual niche in favour of selecting sites based upon largely irrelevant physical properties.

2.1.3 Definitions in Ireland

Though beyond the main focus of this thesis, it is necessary to consider the numerous island dwellings in Ireland which display almost identical attributes to their Scottish counterparts in both construction and use. The influences of Irish archaeology have also played a key role in the formation of Scottish frameworks. In the overall record, Irish sites pose a particular

problem as sites appearing in the Mesolithic may have been elevated lakeside platforms or lakeside settlements having direct access to the foreshore, not perhaps intended to be islets but rather elevated to create a dry foundation in otherwise unoccupiable ground (Fredengren 2002: 11) – perhaps a similar dynamic to Glastonbury in England. Fredengren has perhaps unwittingly complicated the matter by categorically referring to these lakeside platform settlements, as 'crannogs', an important aspect when dealing with sites intended to be completely surrounded by water away from the foreshore, e.g. islands. At the opposite end of the Irish spectrum, Lynn's influential article chose to narrowly define crannogs as an isolated Early Historic development, categorically different from 'flimsy' prehistoric island dwellings that lacked essential features of a 'true' crannog (Lynn 1983: 50; Fredengren 2004: 9). Therefore, we are left with an Irish interpretation of a crannog as a robustly palisaded defended islet that was the main dwelling of local ruling elite originating around the 6th century AD.

Therefore, with Lynn's view we are left with an Irish interpretation of a crannog as a robustly palisaded, defended islet that served as the main dwelling of local ruling elite who suddenly moved to the water around the 6th century AD. Critically, the glaring limitation of the Lynn definition is the wholesale exclusion of sites which do not meet select criteria, namely artificial islands which were occupied in prehistory. One example of this dilemma is the apparent exclusion of the little known site Toome Bar in Lough Neagh (Wood-Martin 1886: 169) which produced bronze swords of the Ballintober variety from a site containing upright piles and horizontally placed timbers on a sandbar location in the centre of the lough. Another, recently excavated example is Coolure Demense (O'Sullivan & Sands 2007: 303) which returned radiocarbon dates from the Iron Age. It is therefore apparent that island dwellings of an artificial nature were being constructed prior to the Early Historic period in Ireland, and the definition formerly in widespread acceptance in Ireland has been challenged with mounting evidence of later prehistoric use extending into the Bronze Age in Scotland, a particularly elusive aspect of Scottish studies which would no doubt benefit from the discovery of waterlogged deposits (Johnson 1999:23).

It is not until the Early Historic Period (or Early Christian Period) in Ireland that the

traditionally held emergence of crannogs in the strict sense put forward by Lynn (1983) begin to appear in number, yet growing radiocarbon evidence in Ireland has altered this significantly. There now exists a clear understanding that a number of Early Historic period crannogs likely represent reuse of prehistoric sites dating to the Late Bronze Age (Newman 1997: 91; Cavers 2010: 79). These 'restricted definition' sites, in the Lynn view, appear as heavily palisaded artificial islets roughly a millennium after they make their initial appearance in Scotland yet as stated above, living on water in Ireland was a well-established occurrence prior to this phase as radiocarbon determinations testify, indicating broadly consistent use dating to at least the LBA/EIA transition along with more intermittent evidence prior to this (O'Sullivan & Sands 2005: 309). It is therefore apparent that island dwellings of an artificial nature were being constructed prior to the Early Historic period in Ireland and the definition currently in widespread acceptance in both Scotland and Ireland needs to be reconsidered based upon this concept alone.

Meanwhile, in a situation which mirrors the Scottish mainland-Hebridean classificatory dilemma, an Irish counterpart to the Hebridean 'island dun' exists primarily in County Connemara and County Donegal. These stony islets are referred to as 'island cashels'. The presence of drystone islets in north west Ireland is not surprising given the abundance of stone in the environment versus the relative lack of timber resources – a similar dynamic as the Western Isles. Again paralleling their Hebridean relations, this phenomenon is indicative of a shared cultural identity, yet relatively little is known of island cashels in regards to chronology although the term 'cashel' typically implying a later prehistoric or Early Historic floruit (O'Sullivan 1998: 128).

2.2 Key issues with current terminology

From a pragmatic standpoint, I would consider any island partially artificial if it has been modified, structurally reinforced or revetted regardless of chronology, purpose or location, be it an estuarine or inter-tidal site. Nevertheless, an adherence to separating sites based upon artificial foundations versus natural is at least overly restrictive, if not counter-productive, when examining the phenomenon: 'artificiality is not seen to be the central defining concept in the observable islet forms' (Henderson 1998: 238). The definition for

'crannog' in Scotland today excludes a large number of islet sites which share the same conceptual and ideological purpose. Morrison (1985: 16-20) has perhaps yielded the most influence on the term as it officially appears in the RCAHMS thesaurus:

> *An island, partly or wholly artificial, often formed by dumping timber, earth and stones and revetted with timber piles or a palisade. Built in a loch, wetland or estuary and dating from prehistory to medieval (Canmore 2010).*

While I do not take fundamental issue with this definition, it is understood that crannogs were built as late as the 16th and 17th century while use actually continued into the 18th century which certainly places them in a Post-Medieval context and beyond. Perhaps the crux of the issue is that the RCAHMS states that an artificial island can be simply defined as 'a crannog that does not show visible signs of occupation' (*ibid*), a frequent scenario for the majority of sites that are heavily vegetated or submerged altogether. Using the above definition as a guide, the majority of sites, especially those that may have had wooden superstructures (i.e. houses) will naturally appear unoccupied by simply performing a walkover survey, inaccurately categorising a large number of sites which were certainly used as dwellings. This problem can largely be resolved by simple underwater inspection without SCUBA which often reveals timber piles or evidence of artificial modification. Finally, 'island duns' are an informal Hebridean class not officially recognised by the RCAHMS that stand alone from mainland sites due to their use of drystone architecture and their frequent, opportunistic use of natural occurring islets in the watery Hebridean environment. This term first appears with Beveridge (1911) and Blundell (1913) who carried out early Hebridean research and has become the common terminology for the vast majority of Hebridean islet sites.

Within Scotland, island dwellings take several primary forms that are conceptually identical yet have never been considered within a single cohesive framework until now. This is largely due to a purely categorical, arbitrary construct highlighted above: definition. This has created a restrictive impact on studies within areas of Scotland which indeed have island dwellings (i.e. Shetland) and have not been acknowledged until very recently (Lenfert 2011; Lenfert *forthcoming).* Additionally, the existence of only two comprehensive overviews on mainland crannogs during the past one-hundred and fifty years (Munro 1882; Cavers 2010),

two general studies (Morrison 1985; Dixon 2004) and none for Hebridean sites or those within the Northern Isles[1], has partitioned a pronounced cultural tradition into analytically fragmented classes which are seldom considered in tandem and never in equal proportions (*cf* Munro 1882; Morrison 1985; Harding 2000; Dixon 2004; Cavers 2010). These two groupings consist of firstly, island 'duns' a highly problematic term, and secondly, crannogs. Cavers notes with considerable understatement: 'aside from a few brief comparisons to mainland crannogs the significance of the strong preference for islet locations of Atlantic roundhouses in the Hebrides has not been fully explored' (2010:70). The only other recent mention of this disparity was briefly voiced by Dixon in reference to Munro's singular view of crannogs:

> *He [Munro] saw no evidence to suggest that the three types [stone, timber, natural islands] were not contemporary, neither did he see wood as a necessary (my emphasis) structural component' (2004:58).*

The crux of the matter is this: in treeless areas such as the Western or Northern Isles, stone was the only practical material available to build causeways, artificial islands or structures on natural islands. In contrast, a wider availability of natural resources on mainland Scotland allowed island builders the flexibility to use stone in conjunction with organic materials (timber, brush, peat) in proportions which reflected immediate resources to *build causeways, artificial islands or structures on natural islands*. Although peat was certainly abundant in the Hebrides, it would have been used primarily for fuel instead of a building material; again as other fuel sources (i.e. timber) were not widely available. This view stands with the exception of a modest number of blackhouses and their immediate Norse and Medieval predecessors which used turf walling or roofing (Armit 1996). There is simply no evidence to support any notion that locally unobtainable materials were ever imported for island dwelling construction anywhere in Scotland. This invalidates any underlying rationale for hard-standing categorical divisions based solely upon the materials used for construction of either the island itself, if indeed artificial or any structures.

Therefore, the lack of proportional consideration in Scottish island dwelling studies between

1The only partial exceptions here are Erskine Beveridge's *North Uist* (1911), which covers a range of site-types throughout history and only covers a small part of the Hebrides as the title implies. Despite remaining highly influential, it is a century old and reflects the disparity in Hebridean island dwelling archaeology. The other example is Ian Armit's 1992 BAR publication 'The Later Prehistory of the Western Isles' which, as the name implies, examines a specific chronological period.

crannogs and Hebridean sites exists despite the two being conceptually identical yet possessing physical differences which directly reflect their immediate environment. Fundamentally, this is a discussion about people living on small islands, witnessing peak popularity at the *same* time (later prehistory) within the *same* distribution area (Western Scotland). The source of this division appears to stem largely from linguistic connotations. When examining regional characteristics in Scotland, early researchers seized upon historical references to an occupied island as 'crannog' with the Gaelic prefix that loosely implies timber-use (Morrison 1985:26)[2]. Although inadvertent, the widespread adoption of the term crannog initiated a classificatory and conceptual divergence amongst the collective suite of islet sites which included all other forms of occupied islands, artificial or otherwise, referred to as *inis* or *eilean*. In the interest of avoiding circular dialogues over physical characteristics and to facilitate consideration within the same conceptual framework, I will use the term 'island-dwelling' or 'occupied islet' in reference to all sites, while specific instances may employ currently employed terminology such as 'crannog' or 'fortified island' as applied by the RCAHMS.

This debate over the classification of field monuments has prompted a long-running dialogue on the specific 'typologies' of island dwellings since the mid-19th century (Wilde 1840; Keller 1866; Munro 1882). This dialogue has resurfaced in recent decades due to the resurgence of interest in crannogs (Lynn 1983; Morrison 1985; Henderson 1998; Holley 2000; Fredengren 2002). It is perhaps ironic that despite a century and a half of island dwelling studies, efforts have unconvincingly resolved issues of definition and categorisation rather than expending these energies towards developing a clearer comprehension of the overall tradition and conceptual logic. Despite a century and a half of effort invested into a classification of island dwellings based upon physical attributes, no tangible advances have been made to date in actually understanding what they represented: 'There are about 500 crannogs known in Scotland but there is no clear classification based upon their form and function' (Dixon 2005:253). Rather than obsessing upon physical attributes, it is important to look beyond this and consider both functions and meaning within their proper chronological context in

2Again, no actual consensus exists as to the meaning of the word crannog other than a broad understanding that it implies an unknown element of timber either in the sub-structure or superstructure (Dixon 2004: 43).

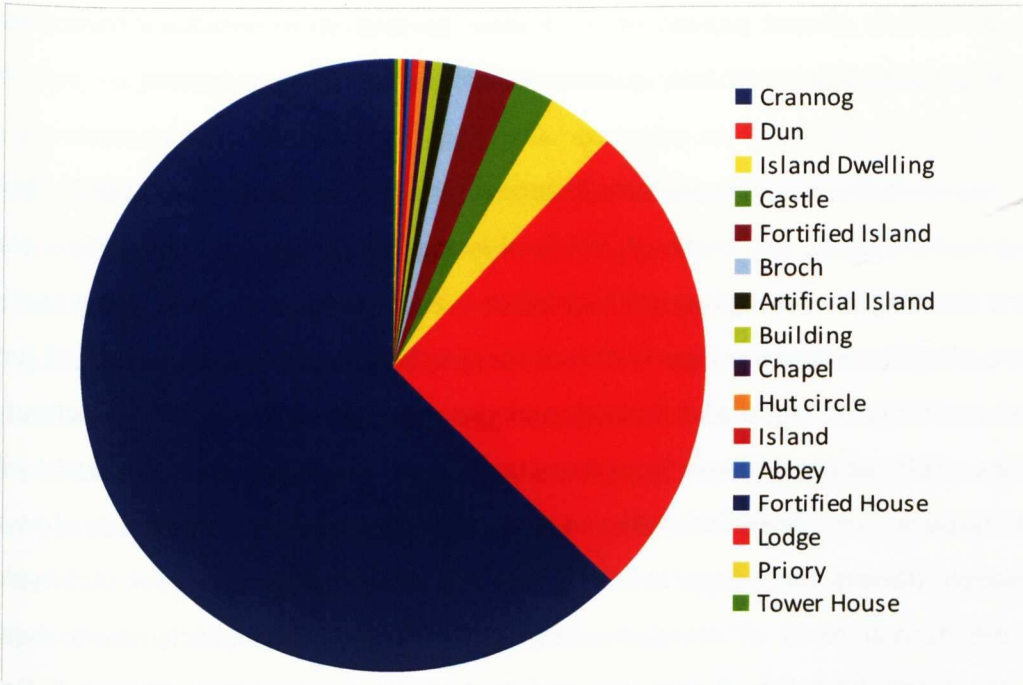


Figure 2.1 *Breakdown of islet-based sites in Scotland by NMRS listing*

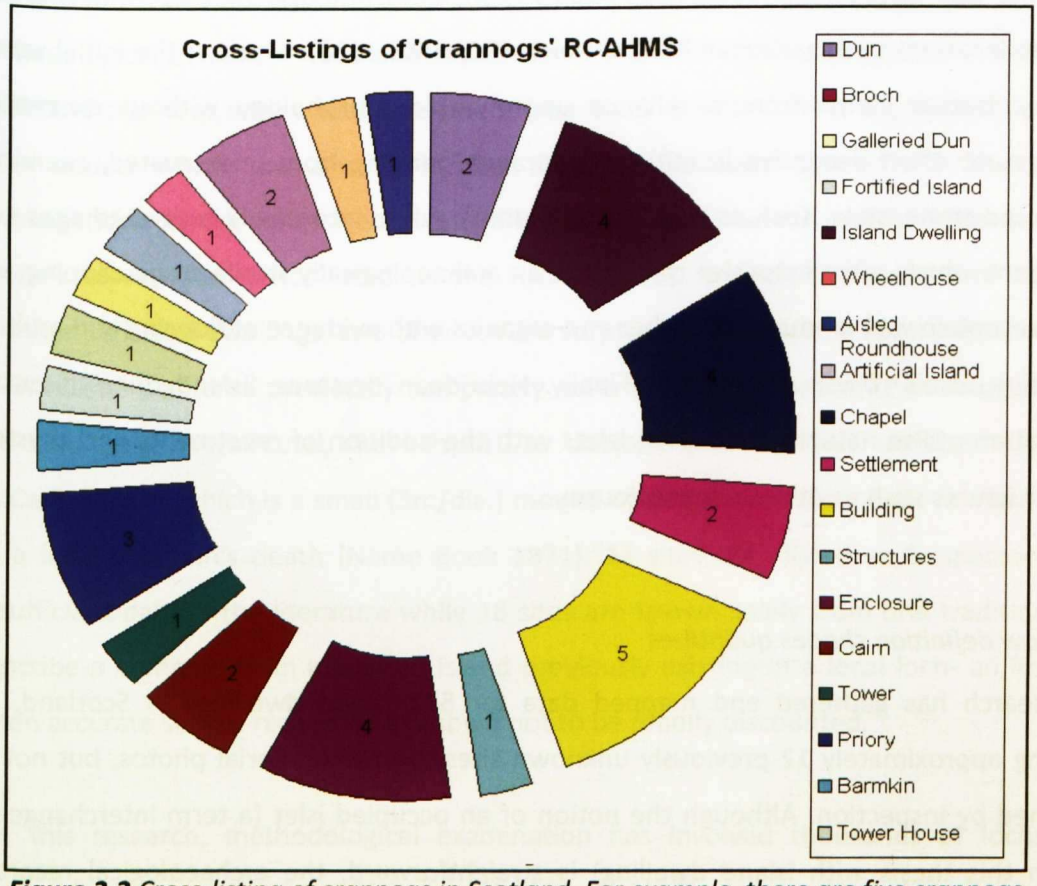


Figure 2.2 *Cross-listing of crannogs in Scotland. For example, there are five crannogs alternatively listed as 'buildings' (yellow) in the NMRS.*

order to achieve a clearer picture. With a view to this, it is necessary to supersede typological restraints in order to fully examine the concept of 'living on water'.

Nonetheless, while the concept may initially appear straightforward (Holley 2000: 2), the use of various terminologies, i.e. 'crannog', 'artificial island/islet', 'island dun', 'fortified island', and 'island dwelling' can easily become blurred or even contradictory when trying to define the degree of artificiality, the categorisation of construction methods (brush, turf and timber known as *packwerk* or stone and timber), and the variation to be found throughout the British Isles. This variation ranges from free-standing pile dwellings as interpreted by Nick Dixon at Oakbank, Loch Tay (2004:143) and partial ones such as the White Loch of Myrton and Barhapple (Cavers and Henderson 2003: 91, 93). Additional examples of sites typically outside the normal remit of island dwelling studies include Meldalloch Island, Argyll a natural island with both Late Bronze Age and Post-Medieval occupation (Rennie & Newall 1996), intertidal sites such as Redcastle, Beauly Firth, and Dumbuck (Hale 2004) or dramatic maritime locations such as Dunan Ruadh, Harris (RCAHMS 1928). Much of the initial variety in categorisation stems from a reliance upon visible morphology without excavation. Crannogs are often deceptive in initial appearance, ranging from unexcavated, seemingly unoccupied stone islets such as Loch Collie-Bharr, Argyll to intensively excavated sites such as Oakbank which, after extensive removal of an archaeologically sterile stone capping, was found to contain vast amounts of timber and organics with evidence of flooring and multiple occupation levels (Dixon 2004: 143). Finally, Hebridean drystone 'island duns' discussed below often utilise naturally occurring islets with the addition of revetments and drystone superstructures such as Atlantic roundhouses .

2.2.1 How definition shapes quantities

My research has gathered and mapped data for 571 island dwellings in Scotland, not including approximately 12 previously unknown sites located on aerial photos, but not yet confirmed by inspection. Although the notion of an occupied islet (a term interchangeably used in this thesis with island dwelling) is straightforward, the archaeological record in Scotland currently belies a disparate range of classifications for the same concept (figs. 2.1 & 2.2). Yet of this grand total, only 357 (63%) are recognised as crannogs by the NMRS, and by

default are identifiable to desk-based researchers as occupied islets. Out of the remaining 220 sites, surprisingly only 27 sites in Scotland are actually listed as 'island dwellings' while ten are classed as 'fortified islands'. Eight other examples are listed as 'artificial islands' while three of these are actually Victorian-era water features built for hosting waterfowl – these are not included. The lack of a simple, yet meaningful term such as 'island-dwelling' leaves the remainder as miscellaneous islet sites absorbed throughout the NMRS under 15 different categories which do not provide no indication of their watery location. Eilean na Comhairle, an entirely artificial island in Loch Finlaggan, Islay which contains prehistoric and Medieval ruins (Caldwell 1993) is curiously listed as a 'building' (Canmore 2010). The majority of the unrecognised islet sites are found in the Western Isles, where they are predominately listed as 'duns', a debatable term in itself as many of these appear to be geared more towards control of animal stocks than as defence against humans.

These Hebridean sites are often identical to crannogs in layout and function based upon the archaeological evidence – the primary caveat being their stone composition in contrast to mainland crannogs with a timber element (*see* Ch. 5 & 6 for further discussion). Additional sites added which are absent in the RCAHMS database stem from Mark Holley's investigations in the Inner Hebrides (Holley 2000), while one is added from Barber and Crone's survey that is not listed on the NMRS (1993). In addition, the author has added another 12 island dwellings, two of which are surprisingly in Shetland (Castle Holm and Loch of Brindister), an area previously completely absent from discussions of crannogs. Also not included in the overall total, I have listed 2 as 'dubious' or 'discounted' as false notices, such as Carn Ailpein, which is a small (3m/dia.) mound of stone apparently built to mark the spot of a local chieftain's death (Name Book 1871). 11 sites are listed as 'suspected' due to insufficient data in the literature while 18 sites are known solely from oral traditions which describe a crannog or an inhabited island previously existing in a local loch- an important, often accurate source research has shown not to be readily discounted.

For this research, methodological examination has involved thousands of lochs across Scotland which were inspected by aerial photography to locate any unlisted or unknown islet-based sites, and then cross-referenced using *Pastmap* to indicate which category (or

categories) they were placed under. Once located, they were then added to the Google Earth database which has proved invaluable for keeping order to the large number of examples. The cross-listing of sites under multiple categories is also a common issue which requires additional consideration (fig. 2.1). Regionally, 22 of the verified sites in the Western Isles are classed as 'crannogs' in the Canmore database largely due to Blundell's (1913) use of the term, while the remaining islets are listed as 'duns', which has become a catch-all phrase for robust drystone homesteads in widely varying degrees of preservation – often not a 'dun' at all. Typically, many Hebridean island duns exist as initially unindentifiable mounds of rubble on an islet or a causewayed islet with scanty traces of stone walling. The actual number remains unverified as sites believed to have been occupied may subsequently reveal no traces of human construction or occupation[3]; the existence of island dwellings can only be confirmed by inspection, survey and ultimately excavation. It is certain, however, that many undiscovered submerged sites remain while those mentioned in historical records are sometimes 'lost' or completely destroyed such as a crannog in Whitefield Loch, Galloway due to construction of a loch-side footpath (Cavers, *pers. comm.)*. Given that there are some 31,000 lochs in Scotland (Smith & Lyle 1979), future drainage or underwater survey is bound to reveal new additions. Area such as Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland, Caithness and Harris and Lewis are sparsely populated, yet dotted with lochs, and are likely to be productive survey areas. While many lochs have been drained in the past three centuries, a large number have actually seen rising water levels due to silting of loch outlets, peat growth, or the construction of dams. As a result, current numbers continue to fluctuate; nonetheless, this has little overall impact upon this research. The exceptions to this are two previously unrecognised island dwellings from Shetland.

2.2.2 Distributions outside Scotland

To provide context and comparison, the exact number in Ireland, the other main distribution area, is more difficult to surmise given the presence of numerous lake-side platforms which have dated back to the Mesolithic (Fredengren 2002). Despite this, it is clear that Ireland embraced the island dwelling tradition. Current Irish estimates range between 1,454 (NMS

3 Holley (2000, Appendix J) encountered this situation when surveying the Inner Hebrides. Out of 143 islets, 36 were unverified, 36 showed no artificiality and 71 were regarded as 'crannogs'.

Eire: 2009; NIEA: 2009) and 2,000 suspected island dwellings and island-side platforms (Mitchell and Ryan 1997:262 *in* Fredengren 2002:6). A singular Welsh example exists at Llangorse island; reputedly the product of an Irish settler in the 9th century AD (Redknap *et al.* 1999: 377). The affinity for this site-type across the Irish Sea has much to say about the concept of shared cultural identities; this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. England is problematic in that a number of references exist for 'crannogs'. Several sites are listed in English HER's (Historical Environment Records) although the evidence is often scanty. The strongest evidence for timber crannogs in England is found at the lake-village of Glastonbury (ST44 SE5) in Somerset, where two phases of Iron Age occupation were revealed during excavation (Bulleid & Gray 1911; 1917).

The first phase used rectangular houses estimated to date between 150-60BC based upon artefactual evidence (including coinage) with the second phase closely following in the first century AD. This involved the construction of some 60 roundhouses which were built upon artificial foundations of peat, timber, brush and clay as the water levels rose. While the descriptions of the pile revetments are in-line with those of timber crannogs, it is unclear if these houses were intended to be islets, or if they happened to become lake-side platforms due to water level fluctuations. However, extensive stone causeways were also uncovered, indicating that during the life of the settlement, water increasingly factored into their daily existence. There are two key observations regarding Glastonbury which leave a puzzling picture in regards to the distribution of crannogs. One, the site does incorporate artificial foundations constructed in much the same manner as Scottish crannogs during the same period of peak popularity. However, the manner in which the site was both constructed and organised reveals a different demeanour than that of Scottish crannogs. With some sixty roundhouses on mostly artificial foundations, the size of Glastonbury is completely unparalleled in Scotland or Ireland. The closest Scottish relation would be Dowalton Loch in Dumfries and Galloway (CH.3) where perhaps up to 10 crannogs were built in the loch. However, several of these have not been located since the late 19th century and contemporary occupation for all ten is not proven. Additionally, they were dispersed across the margins of the loch, not as a single entity. Scottish crannogs are typically small, isolated islets with room for a single structure and possibly outbuildings. We see no indications that

Scottish sites were part of a nucleated, dense element of lake-side rather preferring to be singular monuments in the landscape.

2.3 An alternative classification of occupied islets

2.3.1 Canmore as a starting point

The Canmore online database is defined as 'The window into the RCAHMS database. It brings together the results of the survey and collections material into one place and combines location information, site details and images on more than 300,000 archaeological, architectural, maritime and industrial sites throughout Scotland' (RCAHMS 2010). This portal to Scotland's archaeology often informs the direction of desk-based assessments and researches; it is virtually indispensable as a result. Canmore is open-source, offering full accessibility to both public and professionals, and as the numbers above indicate, contains a massive amount of archaeological data. Having online access to the records held by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Scotland was instrumental in writing this thesis.

Yet within this dataset, it is often problematic to discern whether or not a site is islet based or on land; an issue mainly in the Western and Northern Isles, where localised or supplied terminology such as 'dun' prevents easy recognition. Searches using the various terms listed above cover almost 2,000 entries, while a handful of Medieval sites are listed under 'castle' such as Castle Holm, Shetland (HU34 NE1), despite being typologically similar to sites such as 'Dun' Raouill, South Uist (NF73 NE3), rather confusingly listed as a 'Later 16th century ruin of an island fortlet, *not technically a dun* [my emphasis] (Miers 2008; Canmore 2011). Additionally, the construction of Dun Raouill on South Uist actually dates to the Post-Medieval Period, not later prehistory as the name would suggest, while subsequently used as a prison circa 1610 and later as the venue for the registrar of a Clanranald wedding in 1653 (RCAHMS 1928; 110), again indicating the political and social significance of island-dwellings in the landscape.

Site	Site Number	Location	Classed by what means?	Who?	Artificial?
Taransay, Loch An Duin	NB00 SW6	Harris	Antiquarian inspection	Blundell 1913	No mention
Loch Mheacleit	NB03 NW13	Lewis	Modern Inspection	Burgess & Church 1995	No mention
Loch Cleidir	NB03SW 56	Lewis	Modern Inspection	RCAHMS (SMDG) 2004	unknown
Loch Breaclete	NB13 NE42	Lewis	Aerial Photo	RCAHMS (SMDG) 2005	Partly Artificial
Loch an Duna, Bragar	NB24NE 56	Lewis	Modern Inspection	Armit 1992 p.46	Artificial?
Loch Langabhat	NB24SW 62	Lewis	Aerial Photo	RCAHMS (SMDG) 2005	Artificial?
Loch Orasay	NB32NE 2	Lewis	Antiquarian inspection	Blundell 1913	unknown/not located
Loch Airidh na Lic	NB33SE 1	Lewis	Underwater Inspection	RCAHMS & Dixon/Topping	Artificial?
Loch Urrahag	NB34NW 4	Lewis	Aerial Photo	RCAHMS & Dixon/Topping	Artificial?
Eilean Loch Arnol	NB34NW 9	Boraray	Modern Inspection	RCAHMS (SMDG) 2005	Partly Artificial
Loch An Duin	NB35SE 6	Lewis	Aerial Photo/ UW Inspection	Dixon/Topping 1986	unknown
Loch Arnish	NB43SW 13	Lewis	Antiquarian inspection	Blundell 1913	Artificial?
Osavat	NB54NW 7	Lewis	Antiquarian inspection	Blundell 1913	unknown
Loch an Eilean I	NF71NW 27	South Uist	Modern Underwater	Raven & Shelley	Yes-artificial
Loch an Eilean II	NF71NW 28	South Uist	Modern Underwater	Raven & Shelley	Yes-artificial
Loch a' Phuirt-ruaidh	NF73NE 40	South Uist	Modern Underwater	Raven & Shelley	Yes-artificial
Loch Ceam A' Bhaigh	NF73SE 7	South Uist	Antiquarian inspection	Blundell 1913	not located
Loch na Duchasaich	NF73SW 15	South Uist	Modern Underwater	Raven & Shelley	Yes-artificial
West Loch Ollay	NF73SW 16	South Uist	Modern Underwater	Raven & Shelley	Yes-artificial
Loch Obisary	NF85NE 34	North Uist	Aerial Photo	RCAHMS (DCC) 2005	Yes-artificial
Loch Caravat	NF86SW 70	North Uist	Aerial Photo/UW inspection	RCAHMS (DCC) 2006; R Lenfert 2010	Yes-artificial
Loch Caravat II	NF86SW 71	North Uist	Aerial Photo	RCAHMS (DCC) 2006; R Lenfert 2010	Confused w/ L. Caravat I?
Eilean Falasgair	NB31NE 19	Lewis	Aerial Photo	RCAHMS (DCC) 26 January 2006	unknown
Loch Scadavay	NF 838 684	North Uist	Modern Inspection	Curtis and Ponting, G R and M R 1986	Partly Artificial?
Loch Nan Struban	NF86SW 16	North Uist	Ant/Modern Inspection	OS (W D J) 11 June 1965	unknown
Dun Mhic Leoid	NL69NW 2	Barra	Modern Inspection	K Branigan and P Foster 1985.	unknown

Figure 2.3 *All sites listed as 'crannogs' in the Western Isles (black text) and sites listed as 'island dwellings' in the Western Isles (blue text).*

2.3.2 How different site-types enter the record

One particular indication of this divide between mainland and Hebridean islet sites is the fact that a thorough definition and classification of occupied islets is still lacking long after their antiquarian awareness dawned in the British Isles. It becomes quickly apparent when reviewing the spectrum of sites that a great deal of inconsistency exists in current classification schemes. This directly contributes to a chaotic mix of 19 site categories, 15 of which should instead be considered as sub-categories under the umbrella term 'island dwelling'. This inconsistent use of terminology is largely due to information submitted to the NMRS from inspectors, archaeologists and OS site visits. Incoming data presented to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* by Ordnance Survey visits, fieldwork, archaeological survey, public information and Historic Scotland monuments inspectors is not necessarily

physically verified; rather taken at face value in good faith. Additionally, the preferred terminologies for islet sites have alternated both through time and geographical location which has further confused the matter. Whatever the case may be, after entering the NMRS these initial assumptions are rarely questioned, instead eventually becoming a matter of fact until secondary underwater survey or fieldwork takes place. A simple solution to this would be the training of a small number of monument inspectors to carry out surface investigation with mask and snorkel, bypassing the need for scuba training or boat hire as most island dwellings tend to be close to the shore in shallow water. By default the inspector could then access the exposed portion of the island for a brief walk-over to assess any other visible features. This statement belies the fact that many sites, especially in the Hebrides, have only been distantly viewed from the shore which is undoubtedly unproductive in assessing (and ultimately protecting) a potential Scheduled Ancient Monument.

2.3.3 Sites listed as 'crannogs' in the Western Isles:

Certainly one of the more complicated issues for enhancement of the RCAHMS database lies in categorisation of water-based sites in the Western Isles. Despite having an immense concentration of island dwellings, only 22 Hebridean sites are listed as 'crannogs' out of 165 known or suspected sites while only four are listed as 'island dwellings' (fig. 2.3) and none as 'fortified islands' or 'artificial islands'. Again, it should be stressed that much of this apparent confusion revolves around the terminology employed either by inspectors, surveyors or archaeologists when reporting sites to the NMRS over the past century. Another consideration is when these descriptions were given, as the terminology used reflects the contemporary attitudes to islet site definitions. The earliest NMRS references to 'crannogs' in the Western Isles stem from the investigations of Odo Blundell (1910; 1913). After the publication of Erskine Beveridge's *North Uist* (1911) inspectors tended to employ the phrase 'dun' or 'broch' following the wholesale labelling of sites by Beveridge as 'island duns', a phrase which does not exist in the NMRS yet gained widespread currency in academic circles (Armit 1996; Dixon 2004; Cavers 2005). Again, this has partially reverted back to use of 'crannog' for Hebridean sites in more recent times with reports submitted by Dixon and Topping (1986), Armit (1992), Burgess and Church (1996), Holley (2000) and most recently Raven and Shelly (2005). A lack of consistency can therefore be cited as the main factor in misrepresenting islet sites; this is directly affected by both the archaeologist's personal views

and by the prevailing discourse at the time. As a result Hebridean islet-based sites, regardless of whether or not they are actually a dun, are normally referred to as 'island duns'[4]. Due to the widespread use of this term in existing literature, I cannot simply dismiss this and will consider island duns as 'a category of partially or wholly artificial island found primarily in the Hebrides which generally incorporates a form of drystone architecture'. Meanwhile, 'crannogs' as such in the Hebrides may not reveal any readily discernible indication of what form the superstructure[5] took on due to collapse or lack of clear evidence of walling (Morrison 1985: 37; Armit 1990: 51 1992: 17). Regarding the term *islet* or *island*, Holley preferred a break at 1800m² due to a sharp drop in sites over this size when he surveyed the central Inner Hebrides. This is indicated by a cut-off for 'islets' at approximately 48m/dia. although size is 'not significant in and of itself' (Holley 2000:2). I use the term interchangeably as there is no clear relationship between size, age or function. The only correlation that exists for larger artificial islets is the longer they were in use, the larger they may become from periodic enlargement of the initial construction. (cf Priory Island, Loch Tay: NN74 NE5). However, the conceptual thread which unites all sites, mainland or Hebridean, is *the desire to live on water.* This underlying commonality is simply not coherent in current categorisations.

On the mainland, however, the picture is not so clear. Part of the issue for archaeologists who investigate mainland crannogs is what is termed here as 'interpretative reluctance' in regards to what buildings on crannogs actually looked like. Relatively few excavations in the post-war years, such as Milton Loch (Piggot 1953), have provided any convincing evidence for the layout of structures atop crannogs. Instead, the recent focus has been upon survey, dating and small-scale test trenching to determine stratigraphy rather than large-scale excavations which would prove useful in more clearly defining the nature of crannog occupation. Two recent large-scale exceptions exist: Oakbank crannog, Loch Tay (Dixon 2004) and Cult's Loch (NX16SW11), Wigtonshire (Cavers, *forthcoming*). The former remains largely unpublished while the Cult's Loch excavation has proved frustratingly complex in defining

4Please see 5.2 for additional discussion on Hebridean definitions

5 Superstructure meaning building or structure built atop of the mound or island starting from the initial construction phase.

Figure 2.4 *Aerial view of Loch Nan Struban which is only one of four sites classified as an 'island dwelling' in the Western Isles despite being virtually identical to the majority of 'duns' listed in the record.*

clear phases of construction deposits (Cavers, *pers comm*). Regardless of what the actual structures atop crannogs may have looked like, the decision to build on a small islet, artificial or otherwise, has much to say in regards to the function or meaning of a site beyond the classic 'defensive' hypothesis which has predominated since antiquarian interest in island dwellings began. The decision to build on water needs to be clearly placed in a distinct, *coherent* category in the archaeological record. For the most part, this need has largely been served by the term 'crannog', yet it can be seen to relate more to a general concept in contrast to the multitude of Hebridean categories, primarily 'island dun' or simply 'dun', which tend to refer instead to the actual structure atop the islet.

This is where underwater examination of the substructure plays a key role to indicate if the island is at least partly artificial, which for the purposes of this thesis, indicates a 'crannog'. As excavation is the only means to ascertain the artificiality of the entire islet, a widely unrealistic proposition, the burden of proof is heavily reliant upon underwater inspection.

Only four sites have been subject to modern sondage in the Western Isles: Dun Bharabhat (Harding and Dixon 2000), Berigh (Harding and Gilmour 2000), Eilean Domhnuill (Armit 2006) and Eilean Olabhat (Armit 2009). Conversely, the four sites listed above as 'island dwellings' in the Western Isles (fig. 2.3) further indicate the state of disunity prevalent in the current records. Loch Nan Struban (NF86SW16; fig. 2.4) is a prime example of the confusing categorisation of these sites, and is perhaps the only likely prehistoric islet site that is correctly listed as an island dwelling. From both aerial photography and Beveridge's indication of traces of robust walling (1911:185) it is clear there is absolutely no reason why this particular site should be categorised apart from the remaining 155 'non-crannog' sites in the Western Isles which remain variously as 'duns', 'galleried duns', 'brochs' and 'island dwellings'.

However, rather than simply reclassifying Loch Nan Struban from 'island dwelling' to 'dun' in the NMRS to fall in-line with the remaining sites, the more logical solution is to simply reclassify non-crannog sites, most prolific in the Western Isles, to reflect their watery location. This concept forms the main thrust of this chapter - the need to reclassify *all non-crannog* islet sites in Scotland as 'island dwellings' while retaining secondary information specific to *known* details such as 'dun', 'galleried dun' or 'broch' (e.g. the broch in Loch an Duna, Bragar NB24NE 2). Sites which display partial or completely artificial foundations may correctly be referred to as 'crannogs' and therefore do not need the 'island dwelling' revision which prevents the redundant re-classification of the 358 current crannogs which are, by definition, already recognised as islets. Finally, marine locations (i.e. Dun Mhic Laithainn NF97SE1 or Eilean Na H-Iolaire NF85NE13) are also correctly labelled when using the term 'island dwelling' as referring to these examples as lake-dwellings is inaccurate.

This straightforward revision reduces the corpus of 571 Scottish islets, currently divided into no less than eighteen different sub-categories, into two meaningful and quickly recognisable niches when searching the NMRS: island dwelling or crannog. Arguably, this will include one possible burial cairn, Newbarns Loch (NX85SE33), yet this site is already listed as a crannog based upon several seasons of excavation (Penman & Penman 2002; 2003; 2008) so the revised classifications would have no effect in this instance. The only other caveats are

chapel sites which would not necessarily have been occupied as domestic structures as such, although many did see small sleeping chambers attached (Henderson *pers comm.).* Regardless, they often tend to overlie earlier prehistoric occupation levels (e.g. Pygmie's Isle, Lewis NB56NW4) so full excavation would be the only foreseeable way to remove any chapel sites from the island dwelling category. The chapel islet sites in Scotland currently include five examples: Bretta Ness (HY33SE12), Loch of Clunie (NO14SW4), St. Margaret's Inch (NO45SW12), Long Island (NX35SW13) and the above mentioned Pygmie's Isle.

A secondary consideration towards further enhancement of the NMRS database relates to the type of structure found atop the islet. Here, variation abounds as would be expected; there is obviously no fast rule for islet 'function' or architectural expression through the millennia other than the underlying remit of settlement. Instead of attempting to further refine all sub-categories, a task beyond the scope of this thesis, it is of primary importance here to recommend to the RCAHMS that island dwellings be amended in the NMRS as such, while retaining existing secondary classification of structures or site function, (e.g. dun, chapel, broch or castle, for instance). This at a minimum provides both proper context and recognition for islet sites while allowing researchers the flexibility to determine for themselves what relevance the superstructure may hold, for example researches of monastic sites versus researches on Neolithic settlement. Once the issue of categorisation is dealt with, it will become markedly easier to examine both the range and variety of island sites when making critical decisions for future research frameworks.

2.4 Moving beyond circular debates over crannog definitions

2.4.1 Conceptual considerations

Significantly, a large number of partially and wholly artificial islets are located next to natural islands that appear void of any structural or human activity which challenges the underlying primary rational of defence. This desire to create artificial islands next to pre-existing, natural examples of much larger size is counter-intuitive from a pragmatic standpoint and clearly alludes to different motivations other than simply living on the closest available island. This also indicates that the act of creating an island was, in itself, an important and meaning-

laden undertaking. The use of artificial over natural islets also suggests more tangible motives, including the need for a location immediately on main water routes for access, especially on larger lochs, or as highly visible territorial marker. The creation of artificial islets would conceivably strengthen social bonds by the investment of group efforts into a labour intensive project that left a clear stamp of their collective efforts on the landscape for centuries to come. The juxtaposition between natural and artificial islets can be seen at Loch Lomond, where five crannogs were built near natural islands in the southern end of the loch. Survey work here in the 1990s indicated that almost all natural islands within the loch lacked any evidence of contemporary human activity (Baker & Dixon 1998: 23). This is by no means an isolated case in Scotland. Numerous other examples of artificial islets built next to natural islets include the Lake of Menteith, Loch Awe, Loch Garry and Loch Lundie.

Symbolically, the act of building anew, while demonstrating both skill and a strong desire to leave a personal imprint, possibly hints at outward displays of changing political or social organisation yet interpretations on this level also require an understanding of the relationship between near-by terrestrial settlement morphology and lacustrine sites, an aspect that only began in earnest with Ian Morrison in the mid 1980s who examined catchment and arable land layout in relation to crannog locations in Loch Awe (1985: 79). This trend of 'contextualising' crannogs in relation to land-based settlement was only continued in earnest by Fredengren in Ireland at Lough Gara (2002) and by Cavers as one of the main thrusts in his doctoral thesis (2006). This recent shift towards expanding the scope from simply describing islet sites to including localised patterns of human activity exposes one of the traditional weaknesses of crannog studies which have traditionally 'micro-focused' upon the islets themselves, largely ignoring what humans were doing elsewhere around the loch environs.

Therefore, this thesis considers all artificial, partially artificial and natural islets that indicate human activity and settlement with the exception of a handful of large Medieval and Post-Medieval castles such as Eilean Donan or Kisimul Castle, Barra. Counter to any concepts of an 'evolutionary' progression from natural to entirely artificial islands, the earliest evidence for the tradition is, in fact, an entirely artificial islet. Eilean Domhnuill, North Uist (*see* Ch. 6) was

constructed during the Neolithic around 3600 BC in the Western Isles as rising loch levels inundated the site, yet the occupants chose to remain (Armit 2003:93). Therefore, the phenomenon of island dwellings cannot be viewed simply in terms of a linear evolutionary trajectory. Subsequent examples need not be as complex in terms of construction or artificiality.

Crucially, small occupied islets whether they are classified as island dwellings, crannogs, marine crannogs, fortified islands, island duns, or occupied natural or artificial islets, all share the same conceptual foundation: a desire to live on the water. Yet within this basic remit there exists tremendous variability in size, interpretation of function, defensive aspects, location and degree of artificiality. Crannogs also reveal 'multiple personalities' as domestic homesteads, defended boltholes, workshops, administrative centres, prisons and feasting sites. Although it is important to recognise and categorise island dwellings into meaningful categories, the fundamental concept of *choosing* to live on a small island has often been overlooked in favour of creating overly restrictive categorical criteria which tends to drive sites, especially Medieval examples, into ambiguous niches which ensure obscurity. This compulsion to emphatically define archaeological site-types often masks the wider intentions of the societies in question which archaeologists ultimately seek to better understand.

2.4.2 Fundamental Approaches: 'Island-Dwellings' versus 'Dwellings on Islands'

A caveat to be aware of is that clear identification of timber roundhouses (or any timber structure) on land is often much easier than on crannogs, as waterlogged sites can actually contain an over-abundance of information, with highly preserved timbers intermeshed from subsequent phases rather than dry sites which simply leave a ring of postholes *in situ*. This issue is currently the bane of Scottish crannog studies (Cavers, *forthcoming*). Artificial islets containing timber structures can be notoriously difficult to convincingly discern not only features, but phases as well. The often blurry distinction between substructure (mound) and superstructure (e.g. timber hall, walkway, or indeed roundhouse) makes teasing out specifics an exercise in creative interpretation. The preservation of vast quantities of timber from sites such as Cult's Loch is so complete that phases of structural renewal are often indistinct from

construction of the mound below. Radiocarbon dating, and dendrochronology in particular, have shown that timbers which are centuries apart often appear to be in the same context (Crone, *forthcoming*).

Meanwhile, the complex taphonomic processes involved with crannogs literally act as 'the great leveller' on crannogs, eroding upright piles from all phases and contexts to a uniform height which stymies any attempt at sequencing. This activity occurs while subsequently interspersed with the potential for centuries of infill and collapse between construction and final occupation phases which often remain in near-identical states of preservation. Without dendrochronology, or at least accurate AMS radiocarbon dating of almost *every* major timber from a given site, confidence in interpreting what buildings on crannogs may have looked like is noticeably absent in recent excavations. Therefore, the portmanteau term 'crannog' has perhaps served as a safe moniker for the majority of mainland islet sites in lieu of solid evidence for a well-defined structural morphology which might otherwise place them in various contextual classes such as 'roundhouse', 'timber hall' or 'palisaded enclosure' instead. In contrast, Hebridean sites are not faced with the mixed-blessing of outstanding timber preservation due to their virtually complete use of stone throughout.

In turn, this outwardly visible level of preservation provides archaeologists with robust, upstanding structural remains throughout the Western Isles and to a lesser degree, the Inner Hebrides. Effectively, archaeologists can visualise with relative confidence what at least one phase of the site looked like with detailed survey and inspection in contrast to mainland crannogs, where several field-seasons of piecemeal trenching often produce more questions than answers. It can therefore be said mainland crannogs have traditionally been viewed as 'island-dwellings' as a general over-arching concept, and more specifically as a largely unknown type of ancient structure which likely used timber. On the other hand, more prominent Hebridean sites have been approached from the opposite perspective: specifically as 'a visible dwelling on an unknown form of islet' rather than 'an unknown form of dwelling on a visible islet' with their prominent brochs, duns, galleried duns and in some cases, castles such as Dun Raouill (NF73NE3), Loch Druidibeag, South Uist. On the mainland, it is the island itself, void of visible structures, which most easily offers up evidence for

human activity, usually via the occasional timber pile protruding from the lochbed, while in the Hebrides, stone remains speak for themselves. As a result, the artificiality of the island in a Hebridean context itself becomes secondary in importance and is rarely the primary consideration in the majority of research frameworks within a Hebridean context.

2.5 Unifying the concept

It is stressed within this thesis that island dwellings, whether they are regarded as crannogs, marine crannogs, Hebridean island duns or fortified islands all share the same conceptual foundation by choosing to build on water. Yet within this basic remit there exists tremendous variability in size, interpretation of function, defensiveness, location and degree of artificiality. Crannogs also reveal 'multiple personalities' as simple farming homesteads, royal residences, boltholes, workshops, administrative centres, prisons and feasting sites. Although it is important to consider island dwellings within meaningful sub-categories such as broch, chapel or wheelhouse for example, the fundamental concept of living on a small island has often been overlooked in favour of creating restrictive categorical criteria which tends to drive sites, especially Medieval examples, into ambiguous niches which often completely obscure their physical context. This narrow definition of archaeological site-types often masks the actions of the cultures in question which archaeologists ultimately seek to better understand.

Much of the initial categorisation stems from a reliance upon visible morphology without excavation. Crannogs ranging from unexcavated, seemingly unoccupied stone islets such as Loch Navar in Sutherland to easily recognised examples such as Dun Hunder on North Uist. As such, they tend to be indistinguishable in initial appearance from natural unoccupied islets. However, intensively excavated sites, such as Oakbank in Loch Tay, and to a lesser extent Ederline (Cavers & Henderson 2005, 282), after removal of an archaeologically sterile stone capping, were found to contain vast amounts of timber and organics with evidence of flooring and multiple occupation levels (Dixon 2004: 143). Additionally, the future recognition of unknown or suspected sites rests upon the most reliable method of assessment; performing an underwater examination free of dense vegetation which often

Figure 2.5 *A sign of things to come? A modern intertidal island dwelling on Grimsay, North Uist. It is located some 650m NE from Loch Hornary which contains two prehistoric island dwellings. (Large image Getmapping Plc; inset, author).*

reveals the true nature of the island in question. Simply viewing sites from shore, as is often the case (e.g. RCAHMS 1928; OS inspections) or performing a walkover survey seldom gives reliable results for suspected mainland crannogs while upstanding stone visibility for Hebridean sites is decidedly more productive, provided the structure has not been robbed for re-use elsewhere.

The data gathered in this thesis indicates that building on water was an inherent part of Scottish life for millennia. This cultural tradition only occurred in one other area with any frequency and scale: Ireland. There is one crannog in Wales, a likely example of 'cultural diffusion' despite the current theoretical unpopularity of this term. The fact that Llangorse was built in the early 10th century, a time when Scottish construction appears to completely halt, points to Irish influences where this tradition remained active during the Norse period. This notion is supported by the limited historical references for Llangorse (Campbell & Lane

1989: 675). In contrast, no crannogs exist in England despite areas which are ideal for their construction. Cumbria is a prime example, located directly across the Solway Firth, along which numerous examples dot the south-west Scottish landscape of Dumfries and Galloway. Meanwhile, the Somerset marshes in south-west England contain evidence of Neolithic and later Iron Age examples of thriving wetland communities, yet the construction and occupation of islands, not merely wetland settlement appears to be exclusive to Scotland and Ireland. This distribution, set against the unrelated modern-day political boundaries of the British Isles, has no implications as such for the formation of what we now know as Scotland. The later prehistoric climax of use demonstrates this well before any concept of 'Scotland' ever existed, yet it does appear that regional cultural expressions were a key factor in the development of island-dwellings, especially completely artificial crannogs. Indeed, in south-east Scotland island-dwellings remain starkly absent despite the presence of a scant number of archaeological anomalies which typically appear within the Atlantic zone of the north and west, such as Edin's Hall (NT76 SE6), which stands as the only apparent broch in the south-east borders area. Ultimately, it is not only the architectural forms which archaeologists should be concerned with, but the location as well. Therefore vernacular architecture, i.e. duns or brochs, on small islets (*e.g.* Dun Bharabhat, Lewis) cannot be simply regarded in the same manner as duns or brochs in terrestrial locations (*e.g.* Edin's Hall).

Chapter 3

The Trajectory of Island Dwelling Use in the South West: Ayrshire to Dumfries and Galloway

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin with a regional examination of settlement archaeology focussing on the emergence of island dwellings in south-west Scotland (fig. 3.1) during the Pre-Roman Iron Age, and to what extent the later 'Roman interlude' has contributed to archaeologically visible patterns of settlement morphology in the south west Iron Age. Building upon this theme, I will explore the continuity of island dwelling use into the Medieval and Post-Medieval Periods, and what this may reveal about the expression of island dwellings as a culturally specific facet of south west Scotland. To begin with a discussion of the Pre-Roman Iron Age in Dumfries and Galloway ,by default, necessitates a number of provisos.

3.1.1 The 'Ironless' Early Iron Age in Western Scotland

The initial issue of chronology here extends from approximately 700 BC to the campaigns of the Roman governor Cerialis shortly after AD 71. The start date of 700 BC is based upon a number of factors including evidence for the introduction of iron itself, albeit mainly in the form of votive hoards after the Late Bronze Age style (Stell 1996: 12; Armit 1997: 169). The term 'Iron Age' in itself is perhaps a misnomer in that iron manufacture was not readily adopted[1] until after the end of the first millennium BC in the Atlantic zone (Henderson 2007: 116). Again, as Henderson points out, the reluctance or the inability to manufacture iron on a large scale indicates a degree of continuity in traditions from the Late Bronze Age (*ibid*, 116). Therefore the term 'Iron Age' is used here, although it can be considered an arbitrary term based upon the existing evidence for the use of iron which is sparse. The term 'later prehistoric' can be taken to imply the last millennium BC when used in the discussion below and is perhaps a more useful term in that it does not rely upon the appearance of a single

[1] Sparse examples of EIA metalwork do exist in the south-west, often from hoards, yet it is unclear whether these objects were imports or produced locally (Scott 1960).

Figure 3.1 *Distribution of island dwellings in south west Scotland by NMRS classifications: white/black icons represent 'crannogs', red diamonds are 'island dwellings' yellow triangles are 'fortified islands'.*

technological trait which has little visibility in the archaeological record until the last century BC/ first century AD.

Stepping away for a moment from a rigid take on the Iron Age, a brief mention of both metal finds and metalworking proper from the south west is provided for context. A common conception is that hoards from the Late Bronze Age, such as the Craigbeoch hoard, Loch Awe, Argyll, are consistently interpreted to be votive offerings. This is not always the case, as not all hoards were deposited in a watery place without any intention of recovery. Rather, they were often deposited near a landmark which would have indeed provided a distinct chance of retrieval. To mirror Scott's interpretation (1966), founder's hoards were precisely that,

hoards that were secreted away with the premise of being reused. This perhaps explains the lack of depositional goods that one might expect to find near a crannog occupied during the late Iron Age; simply metal objects were in short supply, quickly melted and re-used or were not widely used. At the beginning of the first millennium BC, it is apparent that the trade networks that supported the tin and bronze exchange were at a breaking point or in danger of failing, yet perhaps people simply did not want to deal with new avenues of supply or potential usurpers.

Given the amount of gold from Ireland made into ornamentation during the Late Bronze Age and the continuity in long established trade networks, it is entirely conceivable that inhabitants on *both* sides of the Irish Sea were not initially impressed with iron and all that it brought with it. Such a material often oxidised quickly and was hard to work, even after considerable heating, despite having durable properties for tool-making compared to bronze. From personal experience using modern reconstructions, bronze axes work nearly as well as iron on timber if sharpened regularly. If decay after deposition is cited as a reason for the lack of metal work in the EIA material record, this fails to explain away a consequent lack of moulds or crucibles on sites. Conservatism, at least in regards to new technology, appears to have been the attitude of the day; this is reflected in the material of the region well into the 'Iron Age' until the last century BC/first century AD by the continued use of bronze (albeit sporadic), lithics and wooden artefacts until iron-working was fully accepted.

3.1.2 Romans in the south west

Technically, the traditional end of the Iron Age in southern Scotland revolves around the campaigns of the Roman governor Cerialis shortly after AD 71 when large scale Roman military activity in the south-west is evidenced by the appearance of Flavian period forts at Gatehouse, at Glenlochar and especially at Dalwinston. Although many indigenous tribes in Scotland were for the most part unsubdued by intermittent Roman activity, the historical record indicates that a Roman legionary base under Agricola existed as far north as Inchtuthill on the River Tay and marching camps, however ephemeral, extended as far north as Thornshill on the Moray Firth (Scott 1966). This intrusion undoubtedly had a passing, if not permanent impact upon the Selgovae, and perhaps to a lesser extent the Novante[2] of

[2] According to J.G. Scott (1960: figs.32:36) the Novante appear to inhabit the extreme western areas of Galloway, which received less Roman interference, i.e. forts and roads. Cunliffe (2005: fig 9.6) mirrors Scott in this view. Ultimately, modern interpretations of Roman historians and geographers such as Ptolemy in

modern day Galloway, which effectively heralded the beginning of the Roman Iron Age in south-west Scotland. However, crannogs have a particular presence and significance during the Roman occupation and also during the first half of the 1st millennium AD; any treatment of the topic is incomplete if one adheres to a strict chronological division in the first century AD.

3.1.3 Interpretative issues

The next proviso to bear in mind is the inherent danger of over-referencing other areas of Scotland that have received more attention, which by default virtually implicates the remainder of the country. Despite numerous early antiquarian forays the south west has been traditionally overshadowed archaeologically by other areas of Scotland and has languished as a result. Banks (2002:28) refers to what is essentially an 'archaeological hierarchy' in that Orkney, followed by the Highlands, the Islands and then the south east of Scotland have received markedly more attention than south-west Scotland (i.e. below the Forth-Clyde isthmus). However, it is the writer's belief that the highlands have also been overlooked archaeologically to a large degree as well; this has direct implications for the following chapter on Argyll.

Lack of excavation can therefore be cited as an impediment in teasing out details of the Iron Age in Dumfries and Galloway yet does not necessarily prohibit a productive discussion of this region due largely to efforts by the RCAHMS surveys. Initial publications (RCAHMS 1912, 1913) provided a record of monuments in Galloway while the inventory of Roxburghshire (1956) initiated a series of more recent RCAHMS publications on southern Scotland followed by Peeblesshire (1967), Lanarkshire (1978), North Carrick (1983), West Rhins (1985), East Rhins (1987), Glenesslin, Nithsdale (1994) and most recently, eastern Dumfries and Galloway (1997). The south-west is not without its own identity however, in that the region contains some 75 known and possible crannogs (RCAHMS 2008) that have been the attention of scholars since antiquarian times when Lord Lovaine presented a speech on work at Loch Dowalton to the British Association in 1863 (Munro 1882:38). Recently, the south-west has again become the focus of crannog research (Crone 1993; Henderson, *et al* 2002; 2003; 2006) with the addition of G. Cavers (2003, 2010) in the form of the South West Crannog Survey

the 2nd century AD will likely never be reconciled as to these exact boundaries.

(SWCS). Poller (2005) has also recently offered revised a revised view of Iron Age settlement here, although this interpretation of crannogs is primarily limited to two clusters: Cults Loch and Dowalton Loch. All told, there is sufficient material to provide an adequate basis for a regional examination of the later prehistoric south-west despite a marked deficit of archaeological fieldwork and research in comparison to other parts of Scotland. This foundation will set the context for the Medieval and later examination of island dwellings below.

The final proviso deals with the material record, especially in relation to the centuries BC and the span between the Roman interlude and the Early Historic Period, i.e. 250-500AD. As with much of western Scotland during the Iron Age, there is a paucity of artefactual evidence. It is apparent that many domestic containers were manufactured out of wood, not ceramics, and do not normally survive except in waterlogged conditions. This lack of ceramics has even been oddly explained in the past as evidence that women were not present on 'Celtic raids' to manufacture such objects (Scott 1966: 57). Hand tools were generally limited to stone implements or the occasional bronze item and objects generally displaying wealth, status or a ritual significance are absent from much of the record during this period. As Cunliffe states in regards to near-by areas of Atlantic Scotland:

> *Although there are always dangers in arguing from absence of evidence, the impression given by the surviving material culture of the north-west is that artefacts were not used as significant symbols of identity or status: the efforts of the community were put into architectural expressions (2001: 359).*

This view is especially applicable to the south-west, which lacks even the ceramic assemblages that are found in other areas of Atlantic Scotland, most notably the Western and Northern Isles. Therefore, Iron Age studies rightly have relied upon the 'monumental' settlement forms rather than the material culture (Henderson 2007; Cavers 2006, 2010; Banks 2002: 31; Cowley 2000; Jobey 1971; 1980; Feachem 1973; Piggot 1966; Scott 1966; C.M. Piggot 1948). Stray finds of status goods do occur such as the 'Torrs chamfrein', found in marshland at Torrs Moss, Kirkcudbright in 1829 (Smith 1868; Scott 1966: 56) but these are very rare in comparison to objects from Bronze Age depositional hoards or to assemblages from southern Britain.

3.2 Environment and terrain

Dumfries and Galloway contains virtually every geographical element found elsewhere in Scotland including rocky outcrops such as those visibly surrounding the Mote of Mark despite a common misconception that it is a somewhat benign landscape[3]. The centre of the region consists of steep glacial valleys and highlands, culminating in the peak of Merrick, at 842m OD, while the western-most coastal areas have been likened to the rolling farmlands of Ireland. The region, as most of Scotland, is dotted with numerous lochs and lochans, especially in the west, and is roughly divided into valleys running north-south with several major rivers including the Esk, the Nith, the Urr and the Fleet. The Rhins, in the far west, juts out on a broad 'hammer-headed' peninsula bordered by Luce Bay to the south and Loch Ryan to the north, and faces Northern Ireland some 35 km due west. The Machars, adjacent to the Rhins, consists of a low lying peninsula containing rolling terrain with Burrow Head at the point some 24km north of the Isle of Mann. The region was politically divided into Wigtownshire, Kircudbrightshire and Dumfriesshire from west to east respectively until 1975 when the region was consolidated politically and renamed Dumfries and Galloway. As a result, material published pre-1975 and even post-1975 may still refer to the previous namesakes. In this thesis, the modern usage of Dumfries and Galloway is employed unless referring to specific cases ,or when referring to authors who employ the older terminology.

3.2.1 The landscape in later prehistory

The prehistoric landscape witnessed considerable change after the 5th century BC when pollen counts for native tree-types were reduced by 50% or more in periods as little as 15 years, (RCAHMS 1997: 20) reaching a zenith around 150-50 BC (Banks 2002: 29). This level of deforestation has yet to be equalled to this day and highlights the rapid intensification of labour, organisation and technology which took place in the latter half of the 1st millennium BC, providing access to increasingly larger amounts of natural resources for what was presumably a growing population. Following these clearances, agricultural production occupied the lowland areas with *Avena-* or *Triticum* cereals becoming prominent in the

[3] Banks raises this issue when discussing the perceived lack of archaeological interest in Dumfries and Galloway and likens this perception to an almost 'unadventurous' landscape in regards to the rest of Scotland (2002). Merrick (842m OD) is the highest point amongst several points over 700m OD and illustrates otherwise the terrain of Dumfries and Galloway.

pollen record with pastoral usage not unexpectedly dominating beyond the 200m OD level (*ibid*).

An example of this primary method of subsistence is at Long Knowe (NY29NW 1), approximately 300m OD, which revealed bone assemblages from cattle, sheep and horses with no traces of grain cultivation (Barnetson 1981 *in* RCAHMS 1997: 21). Attempts at deducing patterns of specific climate change for southern Scotland during the 1st millennium BC are difficult as studies of the Holocene climate are predominately based upon Continental studies and variation abounds in the record. The bulk of existing localised data stems from stratigraphic peat records taken at locations such as Bolton Fell Moss, Burnfoothill Moss and Rotten Bottom (Barber *et al* 1994a; 1994b *in* RCAHMS 1997:17). What does appear to have happened in Scotland after 500 BC is a two degree Celsius drop in summer temperature accompanied by an increase in winter rainfall indicated by the appearance of 'fresh' peat over layers of drier peat denoting increased precipitation[4] (Lamb *in* Jones *et al* 1981; Magny 1982). Overall, climate change within the given time-frame is minimal (Whittington & Edwards, 2003: 14) and therefore cannot be reliably interpreted as a major influence upon the later prehistory of south-west Scotland.

However, during brief phases, temperature fluctuation invariably affected the limit at which certain crops or grazing areas were economically viable and therefore had an impact upon terrestrial settlement, especially pastoral homesteads and unenclosed settlements which commonly are found at higher elevations (discussed below) that were not primarily concerned with defensive qualities (i.e. hillforts). These 'marginal' settlements undoubtedly suffered hardship regarding agricultural yields as yearly harvests would have been unpredictable, yet it is likely that competition for land and a desire, or attachment to, a location that may have had a substantial meaning through past memories rooted in the landscape meant a hesitation in relocating to a potentially more productive location. This 'next year will be better' attitude that must have prevailed throughout much of the region during difficult periods was perhaps equally balanced with the simple concept that the inhabitants were accustomed to their environment and were not used to vastly different

[4] Unless site-specific data is available, as in local peat cores, only broad inferences can be made as variation exists within closely related areas due to regional weather patterns. Notwithstanding, it is generally agreed that the overall temperature decreased and precipitation increased in the latter half of the 1st millennium BC (Magny 1982: 33)

climates as travel (unless perhaps maritime) was likely limited in a lifetime to a 20 or 30 km radius in most instances, a view similarly echoed by James (1999).

3.3 Pre-medieval terrestrial settlement morphology: an overview

Dumfries and Galloway contains a multitude of later prehistoric (1000BC-AD500) settlement types based upon RCAHMS (1997) classifications outlined by earlier work (see below). These include hut-circles, house-platforms, unenclosed settlements, palisaded settlements and enclosures, forts and defended settlements including 'unfinished' earthworks, hillforts, promontory forts, crannogs or island dwellings, and 'exotic' forms such as brochs and duns that have unique characteristics compared to their northern counterparts. This collective group of later prehistoric monuments survives as some 450 different sites in eastern Dumfries and Galloway alone, and admittedly presents problems for archaeologists regarding classification and interpretation, especially in regards to distinctions between forts, defended settlements and those classified simply as settlements (RCAHMS 1997:118; Cowley 2000:169; Cavers 2006:150-51).

Earlier work, (Feachem 1961, 1966; Piggot 1966; Jobey 1980; Hill 1982) attempted to tackle the classification scheme in southern Scotland and Northumbria, with Hill (1982: 5) tending to follow a structural sequence put forth by Jobey from work at Green Knowe (1980) which was divided on a chronological basis into unenclosed and enclosed settlement leading into those which contained uni-vallate and subsequently multi-vallate enclosures, which was in turn influenced by C.M. Piggot's work at Hownam Rings (1948). While this hierarchy may seem convoluted it is an approach that forms a usable basis, albeit in need of reassessing, for study in light of the lack of relative or absolute dates for settlement. What is generally agreed upon is that settlement in Dumfries and eastern Galloway is indeed different to sites constructed in the west, with sub-rectangular sites predominating in the east, and curvilinear designs favoured almost exclusively in Wigtownshire, with few exceptions such as Rispain (NX 429399) near Whithorn (Truckell 1984: 200; Cavers 2010: 150).

3.3.1 Recent classification assessments

Offsetting the limited amount of fieldwork in Dumfries, and Galloway in particular, in comparison with the south-east, walkover survey has served as perhaps the largest

contributor of site finds although only a fraction of the region has been subject to this type of investigation (Cowley 2000:167,:168; Cavers 2010:151). As one would expect, the number of known sites has increased dramatically in surveyed areas highlighting the potential for future fieldwork in the region. Cowley reports that 90% of hut-circles in south-west Scotland and 40% of enclosed settlements in Eastern Dumfries and Galloway were discovered during RCHAMS survey (2000:167). Consequently, interpretation of the archaeological record in south-west Scotland has tended to rely upon the better known sequences found in Lothian, the Borders and Northumbria, which differ from the study area (Cavers 2010:149). This is ill-suited given the unique nature of settlement morphology in Dumfries and Galloway, especially as regards the broch architecture, which lacks the typical fixtures of complex northern Atlantic roundhouses, and has understandingly, if not controversially, been recently referred to as 'bastard forms' (Cowley 2000:174). Classification of several settlement types has been further modified recently by Cowley (2000: 169) in hopes of delineating a clearer morphology between open and enclosed settlement and again between types of enclosed settlement and those designated as 'forts' or sites where defensive features appear to play a key function. Categorization of curvilinear and rectilinear enclosures is further complicated by the appearance of a small group of D-shaped enclosures but in the relative absence of any chronological or artefactual data, a useful method is to rely upon spatial patterning and height above sea-level which makes a step towards useful analyses of this site-type.

3.3.2 Hut-circles and associated settlement

Hut-circles and open settlement are well represented in the areas surveyed by the RCAHMS as mentioned above, yet can be easily destroyed in improved areas through ploughing, leaving only faint traces, with the stones moved to clearance cairns or being re-used in other structures. As a result, they mainly survive in unimproved terrain, or adjacent to medieval cord-rig features normally only detectable by aerial photography. The diameter of unenclosed sites tend to fall into the 8 to 9 metre/diameter range, although several examples such as Kirkland at Nithsdale, Rispain and Carronbridge are unusual in that they contain multiple entrances and range between 12 and 13.5 metres/diameter (see Cowley 2000: 170); Rispain and Carronbridge are furthermore set within rectilinear enclosures .

Again, as Cowley points out (2000:169), traditionally the chronological range was believed to have mainly been 2nd/early 1st Millennium BC although finds from open settlements expand the date-range forward into the 1st Millennium AD. The excavations at Carn Dubh (Rideout 1995), an unenclosed settlement in Perthshire, produced material dating from the Bronze Age well into the Iron Age with ^{14}C dates from 2390±50 uncal. BP from burnt timbers and a glass bead dated very broadly from the seventh century BC to the ninth century AD (Rideout 1995: 153). The discovery of a disc-headed pin, regarded as one of the finest examples found in Scotland, is estimated to date sometime around the 11th or 12th century AD and is noteworthy in that the discovery highlights the continued use of the site (albeit in a post-abandonment phase for the habitation period) for some 1500 years. Examples of this type of pin are also known from Ireland, where four examples of high quality were found (Rideout 1995:157). Nonetheless, it is difficult to group hut-circles into a chronological category based upon morphology as many share similar traits that cover the Neolithic to the later prehistoric period; altitude OD is currently the most reliable indicator of a chronological sequence due to the encroachment of marginal land upon lower areas especially during the later prehistoric (Cowley 2000: 170).

The notion that unenclosed settlement was a common feature throughout the 1st millennium BC in south-west Scotland goes relatively uncontested yet some doubt persists as to the chronological frequency while the undefended nature of unenclosed settlements has compelled some to believe that they were therefore built in proximity to defended settlements (Cavers 2006: 153). This does not necessarily seem to be the case in many instances. If one takes into account the relative isolation of western Galloway due to the range of steep hills, now the Galloway Forest Park, which effectively diverts access through the Fleet Valley to the south or the plains outside Girvan to the north, it is easy to imagine a landscape where defence was perhaps not a paramount issue, and agricultural and transhumance activities could occur unhindered and largely unchanged for centuries. Sea-borne contact is harder to gauge, yet a buffer-zone would be in place for casual forays. The later Norse incursions, the largest sea-based intrusions that are known to the area, still managed to only occupy the fringes of Dumfries and Galloway based upon place name distributions .

Unenclosed settlement forms would suffice in function without the laborious task of constructing defensive measures around every settlement, or even being in close proximity to a defended site, as outlying sites would be the first in contact with arrivals from overland or sea, and presumably be able to alert adjacent homesteads. Indeed, the Romans upon their arrival in the latter half of the first century AD built their western-most fort in the Fleet Valley, known today as the Gatehouse of Fleet, adjacent to the Roman road which apparently terminated there (see Scott 1966: fig. 36). West of Gatehouse, there is no current indication of Roman military construction, indicating that they were unable or not motivated to physically occupy modern Wigtownshire, or south-central Dumfries and Galloway. Not unexpectedly, an intense distribution of hut-circles was discovered during survey lying due north of the Machars (RCAHMS 1985; 1987) with ring-ditches and roundhouses tending to predominate the 'neck' that leads out to the Rhins. It should be noted that the large number of known hut-circles in Galloway is largely due to the intensive RCAHMS surveys; only 30 appear outside survey blocks in distribution maps. Enclosed settlements are admittedly more ambiguous than the unenclosed settlements as they tend to be categorised by limited criteria such as shape and size although they hold a later chronological currency dating primarily to the latter half of the first millennium BC and the first centuries AD (Cowley 2000: 171). There are distinctions that can be made in variation between geographical areas; Cowley divides enclosed settlements into three groups: small stone-walled enclosures, large curvilinear enclosures and rectilinear enclosures (*ibid* 174*)*. The small stone enclosures (<20m /dia.) are especially prevalent in Galloway yet tend to be at lower altitudes that hut-circles, perhaps an indicator of their chronological context as inhabitants sought better land as use was marginalised in the higher areas by climatic downturns after the mid-first millennium BC .

These distinctions between settlement typology in Dumfries and Galloway may point to the presence of different 'cultural' affiliations or identities amongst Iron Age inhabitants from the Rhins to the Machars in respect to areas such as Eastern Dumfries and Galloway. However, it must be noted that the landscape in western Galloway was relatively open and that stone was consequently the primary material for construction whereas timber was more readily available in the eastern parts of Dumfries and Galloway; only one example of a stone-founded roundhouse has been discovered in Ewesdale and Eskdale (RCAHMS 1997: 146). In low-palisaded enclosures, 22 out of 32 sites (68%) are found below the 50m OD mark, a stark

contrast to hut-circles which predominate at much higher elevations. Sites classified as 'homesteads' also present similar problems in distribution as aerial reconnaissance has been limited to areas of good visibility for cropmarks (i.e. improved land) and areas of lower altitude due to the aircraft's operating restrictions (Cowley 2002).

Examples do exist where enclosed settlements co-exist in close proximity to open enclosures and homesteads such as Ritchie Ferry and Castle Crawford in South Lanarkshire (Banks 2002: 33). These examples, despite being somewhat of an anomaly due to their adjacent locations, are potentially valuable in that they can provide information regarding the function and possible status of different settlements types within a given group. Banks hypothesises several scenarios for this grouping of sites, but without excavation it is virtually impossible to tell whether the sites are contemporaneous, of differing status or what function they served in relation to one another (Banks 2002: 33-4). Another example that is adjacent to, or set within, successive structures is Cairn Connel Hill (NX06 NW41-3; B79765). This site contains cropmarks delineating an unenclosed settlement, perhaps partially superimposed, at least two roundhouses, a souterrain and two rectilinear enclosures (Cowley 2000: fig. 3.7). Again, this is an unexcavated site that appears to have at least a modest degree of potential for prehistoric south-west studies, especially in trying to determine a chronology for the forms discussed above.

3.3.3 'Fortified' settlement

'Fortified' or defended settlement in south-west Scotland again tends to prompt discrepancies in definition but the distribution of sites under this classification is perhaps the best documented compared to the other forms (Cowley 2000: 173; Cavers 2006:158). This grouping of sites includes defended homesteads, palisaded enclosures, hillforts and promontory forts. Crannogs, which are usually referred to separately in discussions of later prehistoric settlement, if at all, must be considered as defended settlements even if defence was not necessarily an over-riding factor in their construction, an issue that concerns terrestrial sites as well. The better known hillforts such as Castle O'er (NY 241928; Halliday 2002) near Eskdalemuir, Tynron Doon (NX 819939) and Burnswark Hill (NY 1878, 1879) have produced reliable evidence for activity in the latter half of the first millennium BC and early centuries AD (Stell 1996). Radiocarbon dates from the annexe which was constructed after

the initial defences at Castle O'er range from the first century BC to the 5th century AD (Appendix 1), 1780±80 BP (GU-2035; 75-428 cal. AD) and 1975±50 BP (GU-2029, 55BC-134 cal. AD) confirming that the site was occupied for a considerable period in later prehistory with at least two recognised phases of construction (*see* RCAHMS 1997: fig. 73). Pollen analysis taken from Castle O'er indicates a high level of pastoral activity during occupation; subsequently the extensive linear earthworks adjacent to the site have been interpreted as pens or holding areas for livestock, not as a defensive measure (RCAHMS 1997: 79). While the site may have had a defensive role at some point, perhaps early on, it is apparent that it served as the centre of an 'estate' system as well (RCHAMS 1997: 78).

Another site some 3 km SE of Castle O'er is Bailiehill Fort (NY255 905), similar in design but as yet unexcavated although a survey was undertaken by Jobey (1971). Scooped enclosures have been noted on the summit, and it commands a view of Castle O'er nearby. Judging from striking similarities in design, it is highly likely that the two were contemporaneous and probably witnessed occupation from the last century of the first millennium BC into the Roman interlude in the South-West. Half of the annexe has subsequently been plough truncated yet within the original enclosure some two dozen possible hut circles exist superimposed upon one another (*see* RCAHMS 1997: 74). The positioning of these two substantial sites within view of each other at the confluence of the White and Black Es rivers either indicates geographical domination of the area by a single group or the boundary between neighboring tribes. It must also be noted that this junction of the Esk lies some 28km from the Solway firth in what might be considered 'marginal' land as these two sites are bordered to the north by land over 600m high; the sites themselves are situated at roughly 250m OD. This situation gives the location a defensive advantage in that high terrain is effectively to the north, both sites effectively control access to the Esk, and interaction with the sea, apparently not a primary factor, was at a far enough distance to yield a degree of isolation.

Re-occupation is an underlying theme for many of the larger enclosed earthworks discussed above in addition to Trusty's Hill, Anwoth (NX 588560) where excavations point to reuse after probable abandonment during the Roman interlude. The site indicated renewed interest in the Early Historic period after Roman withdrawal evidenced by sherds of D and E-ware in

addition to Pictish inscriptions which are generally attributed to raiding parties in south-west Scotland (Stell 1996: 131; Cowley, 2000: 174; Cavers 2006: 162). The evidence for Castle O'er and Bailiehill however, tends to imply continued occupation during the Roman period, and it is likely that they were not greatly affected by their nearby presence as Roman martial technology was such that these hillforts would likely have been rather easy fodder for a contingent of Roman soldiers although one could argue that perhaps Roman resources and ambitions were lacking in this 'fringe' area of their vast empire.

3.3.4 Coastal sites

Promontory enclosures are numerous in Dumfries and Galloway with 49 sites predominately situated in the Rhins and the Machars; only one lies outside this area (RCAHMS 2011d). This is not a revelation as Galloway occupies a relatively remote peninsula which favours farming and pastoral activities where food surpluses could be traded for goods such as 'exotic' continental imports or slaves. We may be safe to assume that a considerable amount of contact took place along the coastline well into prehistory, whether it was trade, random contact, or raids; the historic record attests to the continued activity here as a crossroads for the Irish Sea. The notion of an independent Atlantic 'identity' is more difficult to assess in regards to the development of promontory forts. As Henderson states:

> *The concept of enclosing a seaward promontory through the construction of one or more ramparts is a basic one and does not require an introduction from any particular area. Promontories are everywhere taken advantage of for defence and the practice cannot be used in isolation to sustain specific cultural identities (2007: 128).*

The building methods and layout of promontory forts, such as at Kemp's Walk (NX95 NE 1), are not unusual compared to defended sites further inland (Cavers 2006: 163). The notion that promontory forts or enclosures were not situated with easy sea access (cf. Toolis 2003) is perhaps indicative of efforts to make access difficult for outsiders; occupants themselves could access the water by using retractable ladders or ropes or simply by walking to an area of easier access with highly portable boats similar to Irish curraughs which are still in use today. It is not practical to attempt to isolate a 'primary' function; promontory forts would have served several purposes. The most likely is defence, given the obvious situation such as Barsalloch Point (NX 347412), a late first millennium BC site in the Machars bordered by steep cliffs and hemmed in by a sizeable ditch some 10 metres wide and 3.5 metres deep

(Stell 1996: 139-40). However, the site is approximately 0.1 ha or 1,000m^3, a size that indicates that it could not have supported structures for more than a few families. If this is the case, then the site was perhaps used as a 'bolthole' or served a symbolic function as Henderson terms "the lure of extremities" (Henderson 2007:137) by which places of spiritual significance were demarcated, separating the 'sacred from the profane' thereby fulfilling a ritual role, an attractive notion given the dramatic coastal location of such sites.

Several other factors play into a discussion of the possible roles of promontory forts that can undermine their perception as defensive locations. For example, sites were often surrounded by higher ground such as the Late Bronze/Iron Age site of Dunbeg, in Co. Kerry, Ireland, levying a marked strategic disadvantage against the occupants unless it served as a rally point from which to flee by boat (*cf* Henderson 2007: 134). The Mull of Galloway (NX 1430, 1431), is perhaps more of an 'ideal' location for a promontory fort as the site could control access to portage points across the isthmus to avoid the surging currents found there and provides shelter for boats (Stell 1996: 140). Additionally, an excellent view of sea traffic is afforded on the mull, it is superbly protected on three sides by almost vertical cliffs and trade could have taken place at the nearby cove at West Cairngaan. The amount of land enclosed at the Mull of Galloway is also sufficient for a sizeable settlement with the largest section of remaining linear multi-vallate earthworks extending some 400 metres in length. The most obvious drawback for settlement here is the distance to the mainland, over a kilometre away from the terminus of the isthmus, making it perhaps an unattractive base for pastoral or agricultural purposes.

Another site of similar size to the enclosure at the Mull of Galloway is St. David's Head, Pembrokeshire, which contains evidence for 6 tightly clustered roundhouses ranging from 4.5-6 metres in diameter within a complex system of banks separating it from the mainland. The site was excavated in 1900 and apparently was never published but did yield a handful of small finds such as whetstones, spindle whorls,

Overall, it must be stated that promontory forts served a number of functions; it is impossible to assign a specific purpose to a particular site with certainty. Various scenarios discussed above should be considered on a site by site basis, considering the evidence of nearby inland settlements to provide complementary data for a regional landscape analysis.

3.3.5 Atlantic Roundhouses in the south west

Another type of settlement is the 'Atlantic' site, or Atlantic roundhouse, i.e. brochs and duns of the north and west; only seven sites fall into this category in Dumfries and Galloway (Cavers 2010: 175). It is not surprising given the similarities in coastal environment, contact and identity, that sites such as these occur in south-west Scotland, in addition to the better known and larger distribution found in the north and the west. However, they are considered 'exotic' sites due to their low number or use of slightly different construction techniques in comparison to their northern counterparts (Cowley 2000:174). Doon Castle (NX 067446) utilises multiple entrances which mirrors constructional techniques of other 'non-Atlantic' inland sites in the south-west (*see above*). The structure, with walls measuring some 4.5m in thickness at the base, is situated on a promontory overlooking Ardwell Bay and is constructed with two opposing entrances, roughly aligned on a north-south axis. The existing terminology for prehistoric drystone architecture on the west coast of Scotland, with perhaps the exception of 'Atlantic roundhouse', is widely varied and fraught with jargon, but is occasionally useful to help understand the layout of sites. Castle Haven (NX 593482) is another example of a complex Atlantic roundhouse with intramural galleries and staircase, yet contains a spread of assemblages ranging from the late prehistoric to the end of the first millennium AD which overlies a 'D' shaped enclosure (Barbour 1907). This form is referred to as a 'semibroch' by MacKie who assigns this terminology to 'C' and 'D' shaped Atlantic sites (2008). Cavers (2006: 178), also indicates that the 'D' shaped section bears resemblances to sites in Ireland such as Giant's Sconce (Warner 1983) and Kildonan in Argyll (Fairhurst 1938; Peltenburg 1982).

The classification of this site again highlights issues with structures that contain attributes of both duns and complex Atlantic roundhouses, as Castle Haven is a sub-rectangular construction yet is certainly not a straightforward design requiring a concentrated effort to develop and construct (MacKie 2008: 267). The close proximity of the site (<50m) to Wigtown Bay further strongly indicates maritime contacts along the Irish Sea yet is distinct in that it remains isolated even in comparison to other complex Atlantic roundhouses or 'exotic'

Site	Lab No.	Deter.	Error	Sample material
Dorman's Island	SUERC-22917,	2515,	30,	timber
Cults Loch III	SUERC-22906,	2440,	25,	oak - palisade stake
Milton Loch 1	K-2027,	2440,	100,	timber
Cults Loch III	SUERC-27660,	2420,	35,	alder - horizontal timber
Cults Loch III	SUERC-27664,	2405,	35,	bracken from occupation deposit
Loch Heron II	SUERC-6743,	2390,	35,	Structural pile from base of mound
Cults Loch III	SUERC-22907,	2375,	30,	alder – revetment pile
Cults Loch III	SUERC-27665,	2355,	35,	Alder – occupation deposit
Milton Loch 1	K-1394,	2350,	100,	timber
Cults Loch III	GU-12138,	2340,	50,	timber
Cults Loch III	SUERC-27666,	2330,	40,	charcoal
Loch Heron I	SUERC-6742,	2310,	35,	Structural pile from base of mound
Loch Arthur	GU-12174,	2275,	35,	Timber 201
Loch Arthur	GU-2643,	2260,	50,	timber
Dorman's Island	GU-10917,	2250,	50,	timber
Loch Arthur	GU-2644,	2240,	60,	timber
Loch Arthur	GU-12173,	2240,	35,	Timber19
Loch Arthur	GU-12175,	2215,	35,	Timber 1
Dorman's Island	SUERC-22919,	2210,	30,	timber
Dorman's Island	SUERC-24644,	2175,	35,	charcoal
Barean Loch	GU-2642,	2140,	60,	timber
Barhapple Loch	GU-10920,	2130,	50,	timber
Dorman's Island	SUERC-22914,	2125,	30,	grain
Dorman's Island	SUERC-22916,	2125,	30,	Waterlogged Wood
Milton Loch 1	GU-2648,	2080,	50,	timber
White Loch of Myrton	GU-10921,	2080,	50,	timber
Dorman's Island	SUERC-22915,	2070,	30,	Waterlogged Wood
Milton Loch 2	GU-2647,	2060,	50,	timber
Barlockhart	GU-11564,	1980,	40,	timber
Barlockhart	GU-11563,	1975,	45,	timber
Buiston	GU-3000,	1950,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3391,	1920,	50,	wet wood
Black Loch of Sanquhar	GU-10918,	1840,	50,	timber
Cults Loch	GU-10919,	1790,	50,	timber
Buiston	GU-3005,	1720,	50,	charcoal
Buiston	GU-3004,	1680,	50,	charcoal
Buiston	GU-3001,	1660,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-2688,	1640,	50,	charcoal
Buiston	GU-3002,	1620,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3003,	1610,	50,	charcoal
Buiston	GU-3006,	1610,	50,	charcoal
Buiston	GU-3007,	1610,	70,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3532,	1610,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3529,	1590,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-2637,	1580,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3390,	1570,	60,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3528,	1570,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-3530,	1540,	50,	charcoal
Buiston	GU-3531,	1530,	50,	charcoal
Milton Loch 3	GU-2645,	1470,	50,	timber
Milton Loch 3	GU-2646,	1470,	70,	timber
Buiston	GU-2636,	1430,	50,	wet wood
Buiston	GU-2638,	1380,	50,	wet wood
Barean Loch	GU-2641,	1280,	50,	timber
Lochrutton	GU-2640,	0830,	50,	timber
Lochrutton	GU-2639,	0820,	50,	timber
Dorman's Island	SUERC-22918,	0255,	30,	submerged wood

Figure 3.2 *All radiocarbon determinations for south west island dwellings in ascending chronological order.*

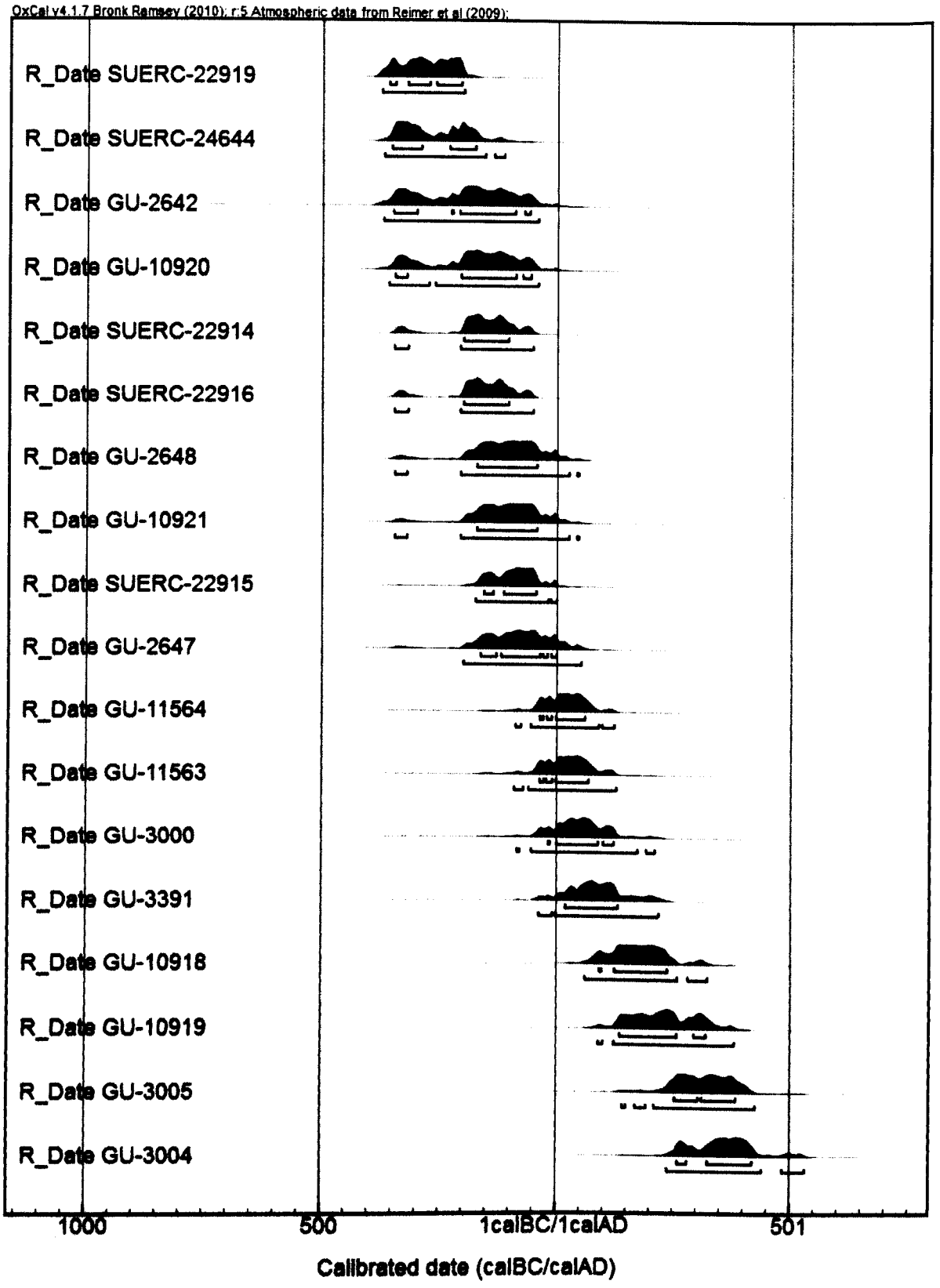


Figure 3.3 *Radiocarbon dates for the south west recalibrated using IntCal09: Northern Hemisphere (Reimer et al. 2009). Both one and two sigma results are shown.*

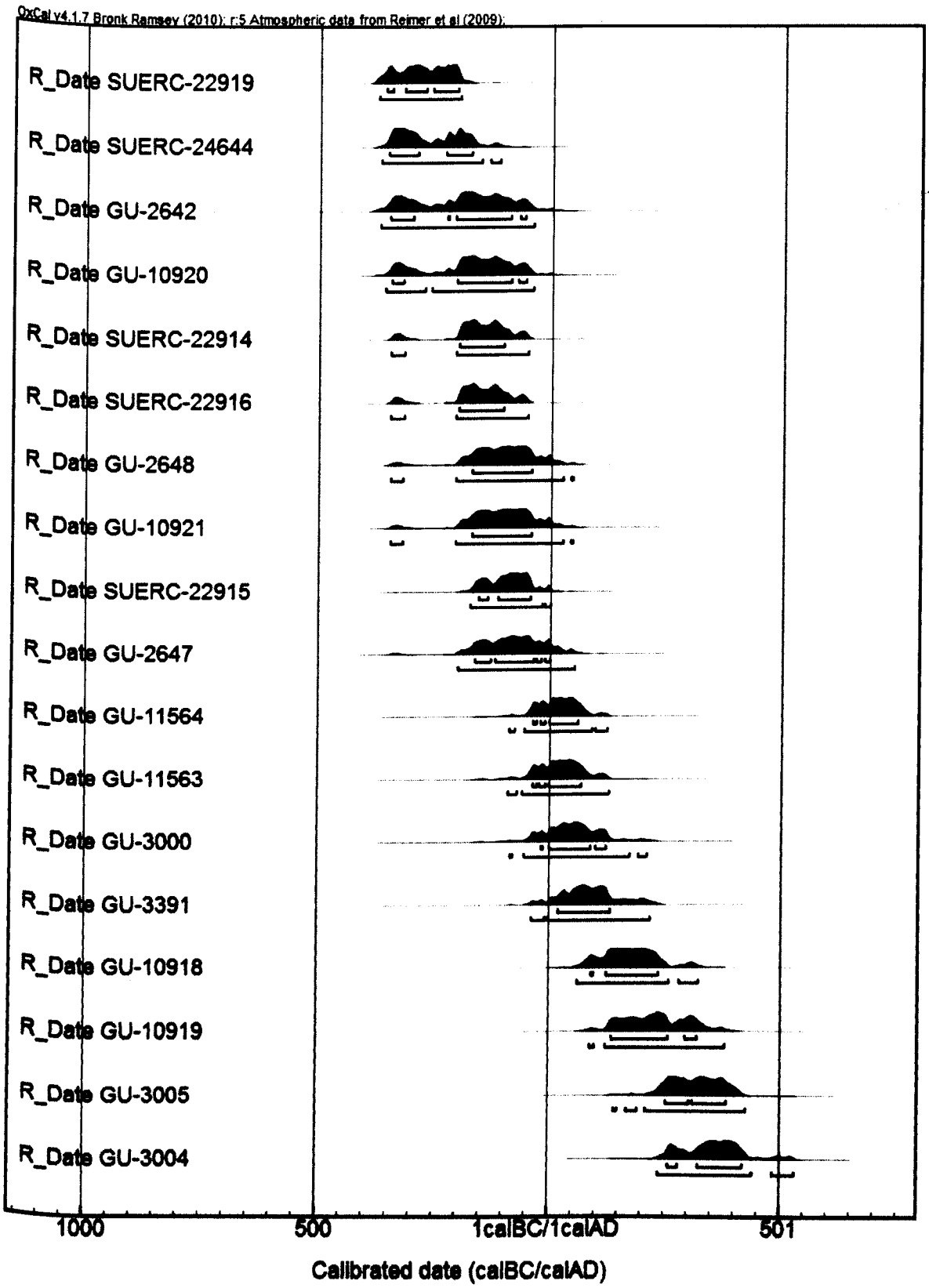


Figure 3.3 cont. *Radiocarbon dates for the south west recalibrated using IntCal09: Northern Hemisphere (Reimer et al. 2009). Both one and two sigma results are shown.*

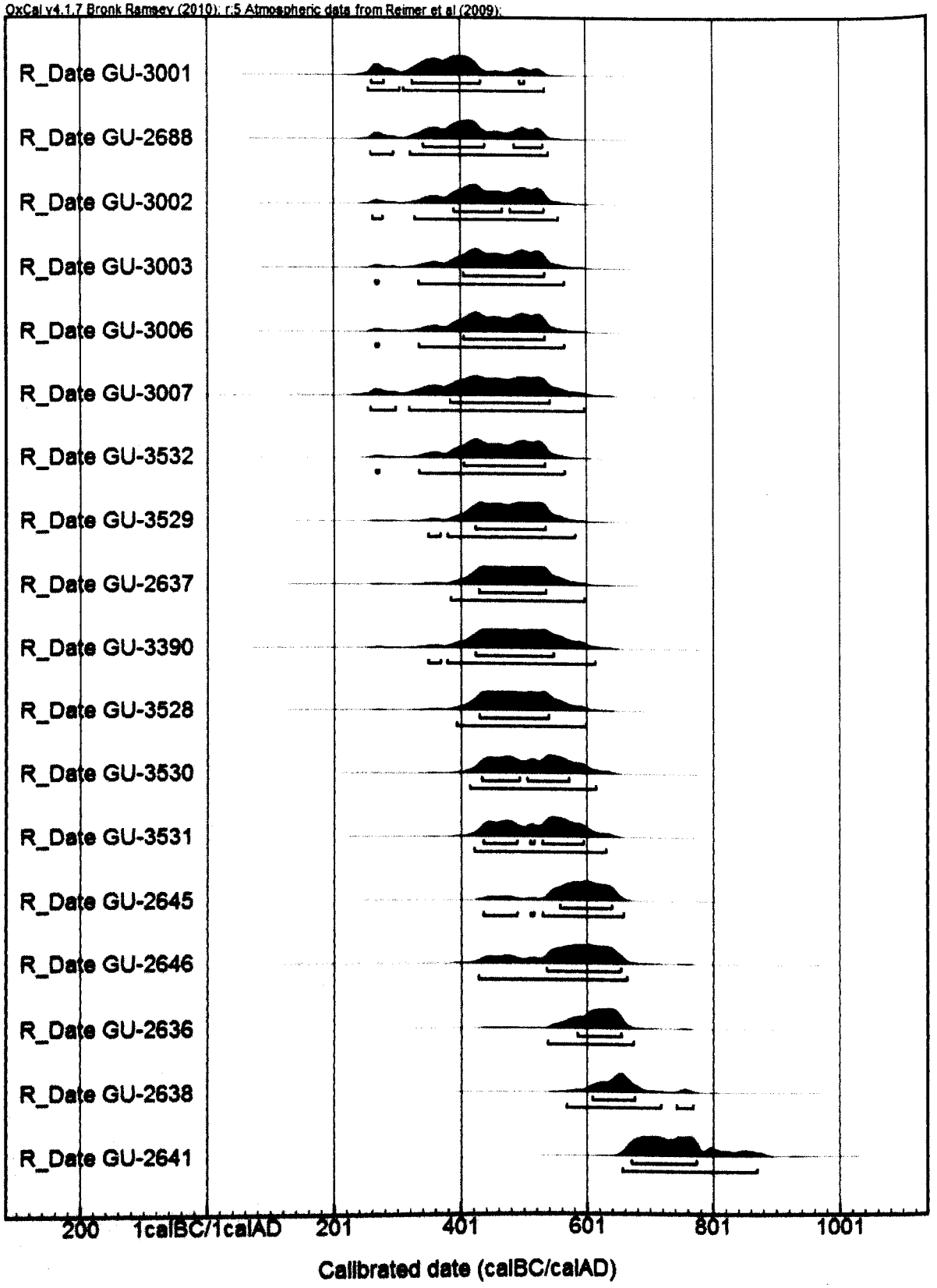


Figure 3.3 cont. *Radiocarbon dates for the south west recalibrated using IntCal09: Northern Hemisphere (Reimer et al. 2009). Both one and two sigma results are shown.*

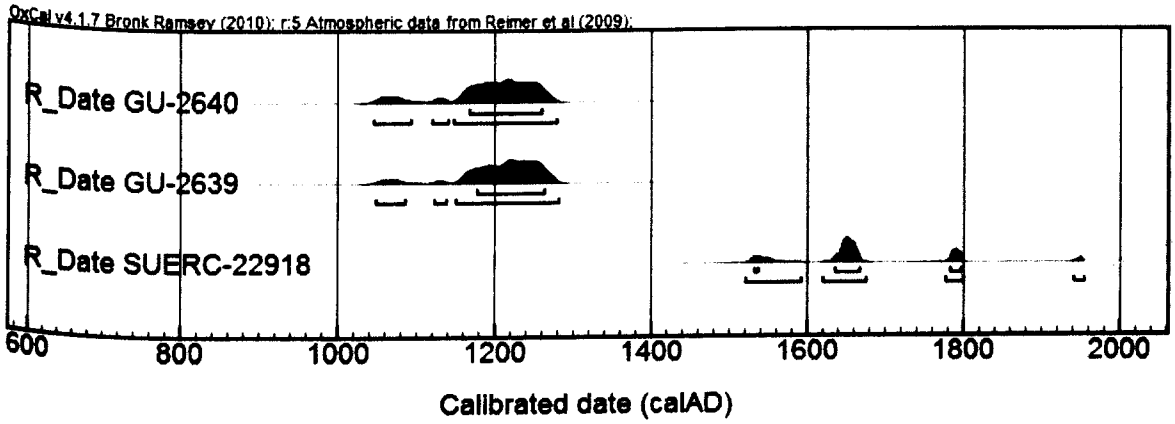


Figure 3.3 cont. *Radiocarbon dates for the south west recalibrated using IntCal09: Northern Hemisphere (Reimer et al. 2009). Both one and two sigma results are shown.*

sites in Dumfries and Galloway. Stair Haven, 40km due west of Castle Haven in the Western Machars, is the closest monument of its type. While this distance may not appear to be particularly significant, one must bear in mind the distribution of Atlantic roundhouses in Galloway, which centres upon the Rhins, indicating a degree of consistent contact heading north along the western coast of Scotland. Thus the notion of these sites being 'exotic' is lessened when put into context with other sites occurring up the coastline of Western Scotland such as Kildonan in Argyll, categorised as a 'D' shaped enclosure above, which shares similarities with both northern sites and those found in Galloway (Fairhurst 1938).

3.4 Island Dwellings in south west Scotland: Ayrshire to Dumfries and Galloway

The above discussion of settlement types in south-west Scotland has set a framework for the incorporation of crannogs or artificial island dwellings into the overall settlement record, yet this combination has been lacking from many regional discussions where crannogs are found until quite recently. With their widespread acceptance in the south west, these lacustrine sites serve as testimony to the efforts of the indigenous peoples in constructing these monumental, watery sites. This visibility in the settlement record contrasts with a marked lack (or inability) of investment into the portable material culture after the Late Bronze Age, despite the perceived persistence of trade networks formerly involved with bronze production and exchange. Therefore these long standing networks of contact are perhaps best represented in the archaeological record by similarities in settlement construction indicated by the general preference for circular dwellings whilst much of the Continent adopted rectangular timber structures as early as the Neolithic (Henderson 2007: 100).

Additionally, these 'localised' wetland sites-if viewed in a pan-European perspective, provide us with an abundance of organic material that is normally absent on terrestrial sites such as well-preserved waterlogged timbers, datable either through dendrochronology or radiocarbon analysis and paleobotanical and environmental samples. Finally, crannogs are often sites where artefacts, sparse as they are during the Iron Age in this particular study area, have often been recovered due to their deposition and subsequent preservation, accidental or otherwise, in a waterlogged environment. In summary, wetland archaeology can be seen to offer the most productive avenue for advancing our knowledge and understanding of the past (Van de Noort &O'Sullivan 2006: 23). Crannogs are especially numerous in south-west Scotland, with 75 verified and possible sites classified under this heading by the RCAHMS in Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway providing a per-area distribution rivalling any mainland area in Scotland. Even taking into account the inequities of unconfirmed sites listed in the NMRS, a strong concentration still survives in this region. Crannogs therefore play a major role in the later prehistoric landscape of the south west yet are conspicuously absent, or mentioned in the briefest of passing, in many treatments of the subject (Banks 2002; Cowley 2000; Cunliffe 2005; Green 1995; Halliday 2002; Heywood 2001; RCAHMS 1997; Stell 1995).

3.4.1 The dating of island dwellings in the south west: beginnings

As discussed above, crannogs in the south west have provided a substantial number of radiocarbon dates which stands in relative contrast with less examined (yet well represented) terrestrial sites such as unenclosed settlements which can be difficult to date on morphological grounds alone. Therefore, this chronological data is understandably a key to creating a foundation on which to contextualise the role of island dwellings in the wider landscape. Of some 15 sites dated to the later prehistoric period (figs. 3.2 & 3.3), the range varies from Milton Loch I at 810BC-380 cal. BC (K02027) to 360BC-30 cal. AD (GU-2648), Cult's Loch III at 550-200 cal. BC (GU-12138), Milton Loch II from 200 BC-60 cal. AD (GU-2647), Loch Arthur, 410BC-160 cal. BC (GU-2644) and the earliest date from Buiston[5] calibrated to 100BC-150 cal. AD (GU-3000). This data denotes a tradition of crannog construction in the south west stemming from at least the Late Bronze Age. Indeed, the

[5] This is not counting the 2 LBA/EIA dates (Date Group 1) from Buiston that were considered 'relict material'. No data was provided for these samples. The site was not excavated to the lowest deposits so the possibility of an earlier origin cannot be ruled out.

earliest dates from Milton Loch indicate construction on the cusp of the LBA/EIA, and are comparable to dates from Highland sites such as Oakbank (GU-3469), calibrated to 830 BC-520 BC or Redcastle, Beauly Firth, which returned a date of 840 BC-520 cal. BC (GU-4542).

Additional radiocarbon dating in Dumfries and Galloway took place during the 2002, 2003 and 2004 field seasons of the South-West Crannog Survey (SWCS) which returned five dates from crannog timbers in addition to the ones listed above . This recent analysis indicates four PRIA determinations: Dorman's Island, Whitefield Loch (GU-10917) 2250±50BP, Barean Loch (GU-2642) at 2140±60BP, Barhapple Loch (GU-10920) at 2130± 50BP, White Loch, Myrton (GU-10921) at 2080±50 BP and one RIA date: Cult's Loch (GU-10919) at 1790±50BP (Henderson, *et al* 2006:36). Two additional dates come from Loch Heron I (SUERC-6742) at 2310±35BP and Loch Heron II (SUERC-6743) at 2390±35BP. In all this indicates nine crannogs that have constructional or occupational periods in the PRIA in Dumfries and Galloway in contrast to only three (Cults Loch, Black Loch of Sanquhar and Barlockhart) that indicate construction in the Roman Iron Age. While only these three sites indicate construction during the Roman Iron Age, this certainly does not mean that earlier sites were unoccupied during this period; this is evidenced by the number of Roman artefacts recovered from island dwellings having origins securely in the later prehistoric period.[6] Despite the substantial regimen of radiocarbon dating from south-west sites, and much improved levels of survey work, island dwelling excavation is still underdeveloped and is likely to remain so due in the foreseeable future due to the inherent difficulties of properly examining these sites. There are notable exceptions to this general lack of investigation, both past and recent: Dr. Robert Munro who first excavated at Buiston 120 years ago, post-war excavations at Milton Loch, again by Piggot (1953), and arguably the most comprehensive excavation report thus far by Crone (2000) from the 1989-90 excavations again at Buiston. Most recent work has been in the form of the South-West Crannog Survey (SWCS), and is an ongoing programme of assessing environmental threats to the preservation of sites along with test trenching and absolute dating. Several sites at Cult's Loch and at Whitefield Loch have also been the focus of recent excavation, returning later prehistoric dates (Cavers: forthcoming). The data

[6] Piggot 1953 (fig.12 p.150) and Cavers 2006a (table 7.2: 211; table 7.3: 215) have both compiled charts of recovered Roman or Romano-British finds from 16 crannogs in the south-west. Of the 'Dowalton Group' only Dowalton I has not produced artefacts datable to the Roman Iron Age. Nonetheless, the lack of objects after the 2nd century AD perhaps points to a period of instability or more likely a direct lack of contact with Roman soldiers.

available indicates the majority of crannogs have constructional horizons in the later prehistoric 'floruit', especially after the mid-first millennium BC (Henderson 1998: table 2). There is one major caveat to be aware of when relying upon radiocarbon determinations from timber, especially large examples. The 'old wood' problem exists when radiocarbon samples from larger timbers, for example, are subject to inaccurate calibrated dates as the sampled portion may be from deep within the trunk. As successive rings grow around the trunk, the inner wood dies. If sampled, this inner portion may provide dates that are decades or perhaps centuries older than the felling date of the tree. This creates obvious problems for archaeologists, and where possible, context is provided for dates within this thesis. Absolute dating experts are aware of this potential pitfall and typically attempt to sample sapwood found nearer to the bark to help offset this issue. In addition, dates are sometimes adjusted if an approximate number of likely rings before reaching live bark are known (Crone 2000: 120). Ideally, grains and cereal provide the most secure samples as they survive for only one season, eliminating this problem (*see* 5.6.3).

3.5 Expanding the view: A crannog 'Dark Age?'

3.5.1 Potential 'Dark Age' sites and the radiocarbon calibration curve

Emerging from the traditional milieu of Roman Iron Age crannog occupation in the south west, there appears to be a hiatus in the use of island dwellings, effectively a 'dark age' from the fourth to early sixth centuries AD (Crone 1993; 2000: 160; *cf* Cavers 2006: 218). This is attributed to a lack of convincing absolute or relative dates from the period, either from organic material (i.e. piles or timbers) due to discrepancies in the radiocarbon curve (below) or the recovered assemblages themselves which carry no diagnostic artefacts attributable to this period. There are, however, a number of sites described below that may be considered active during this period. Cult's Loch (NX16 SW14) was surveyed as part of the SWCS while a radiocarbon assay (Henderson, *et al* 2003) returned a date of 120-390 cal. AD (GU-10919) at the 96% probability mark (fig. 3.5). Milton Loch III (NX87 SW15) was also sampled, returning two dates: 430-670 cal. AD (GU-2646) and 450-660 cal. AD (GU-2645). At Buiston, the radiocarbon dates strongly indicate a constructional horizon throughout this 'dark age' when interpreting the ^{14}C data at the 96% range alongside the artefactual assemblage. Even when narrowing the radiocarbon determinations to the 68% range, a distinct possibility of 'dark

Figure 3.4 *Island dwellings near Buiston. The intertidal 'Clyde' group can be seen starting at the top centre.*

age' use remains while the artefactual assemblage potentially spans the Roman Iron Age to the 8th century. However, the main caveat with Buiston in contrast to all other major Scottish crannog excavations[7] is the application of dendrochronology. This has refined the radiocarbon results dramatically, providing two narrow windows of activity: the late 1st/early 2nd centuries AD and the late 6th to mid-7th centuries AD (Crone 2000: 160). The dendrochronological sequence corroborates the calibrated ^{14}C dates (fig. 3.6), which were subsequently shown to be felled between 520 and 668AD after dendrochronological analysis (*ibid*: 55).

For diagnostic purposes, the later assemblage at Buiston included Continental E-ware, part of a crossbow mechanism (nut), eight knife blades and three spearheads amongst other metal objects, yet this artefactual evidence did not yield any material that would bridge the gap between the RIA and Early Historic Period - hence the island dwelling 'dark age'. In light of these gaps in the material record, it is possible that confidence in radiocarbon determinations from this range can be potentially undermined, and perhaps influence future interpretations to fall in-line with the dendrochronology dates from Buiston. This potential pitfall has received recent attention (Crone 2000: 161; Barber & Crone 2001: 69), employing

[7] See forthcoming article in *Radiocarbon* regarding dendrochronology at Oakbank (Dixon *et al*).

Baillie's 'suck and smear' analogy (1991) in which dendrochronology can overtly influence less secure radiocarbon dates, prompting an erroneous shift of adjacent dates to suit an inherently biased chronology based upon the seemingly infallible precision provided by dendrochronology. When applied to Buiston, this creates a scenario whereby the site was constructed and abandoned in a relatively short time span of two to three generations maximum, then left to deteriorate over a 400 year period at which point a large effort was re-applied to making the islet liveable again. Even considering the frequency of sporadic re-use seen throughout the island dwelling phenomena, this is still a considerable period of complete disuse. Therefore the likelihood of complete abandonment during this period is perhaps overstated, although it is undeniable that Buiston was a centre of intense, renewed activity in the Early Historic Period.

The dating of Buiston becomes rather more complex when interpreting radiocarbon data as 13 dates at the 68% probability fall far outside the tree ring dates which reveal felling from 585 to 620 AD. However, closer examination of the excavation report reveals that only five of the radiocarbon samples were also subject to tree-ring analysis, effectively leaving the interpretation of the hearth and hurdle dates open to some interpretation. These radiocarbon dates were from contexts that could not be subjected to tree ring analysis: specifically charcoal from hearths (GU-2688 and GU-3004), which are certainly indicative of occupation, and hurdles (GU-3532), presumably serving as walling or a partition. Effectively, it must be remembered that radiocarbon assays are ultimately no more than a rough guide; the attractiveness of dates from AMS dating or those that have 35 or 50 year deviations are rendered less effective unless the calibration curve is finely tuned. If the theory of crannog abandonment in the post-Roman south west until the Early Historic Period holds true, it contrasts with a well-known floruit of crannog construction in Ireland (Crone 1993:250). When one considers the similarities in construction, assemblages and chronology, a cultural link appears to exist between south-western Scotland and parts of Ireland. This 'tempting to note' (Cavers 2006:219) similarity appears too large and prominent to be dismissed as mere coincidence, even with the shortcomings in our overall understanding of the dynamic between the two areas.

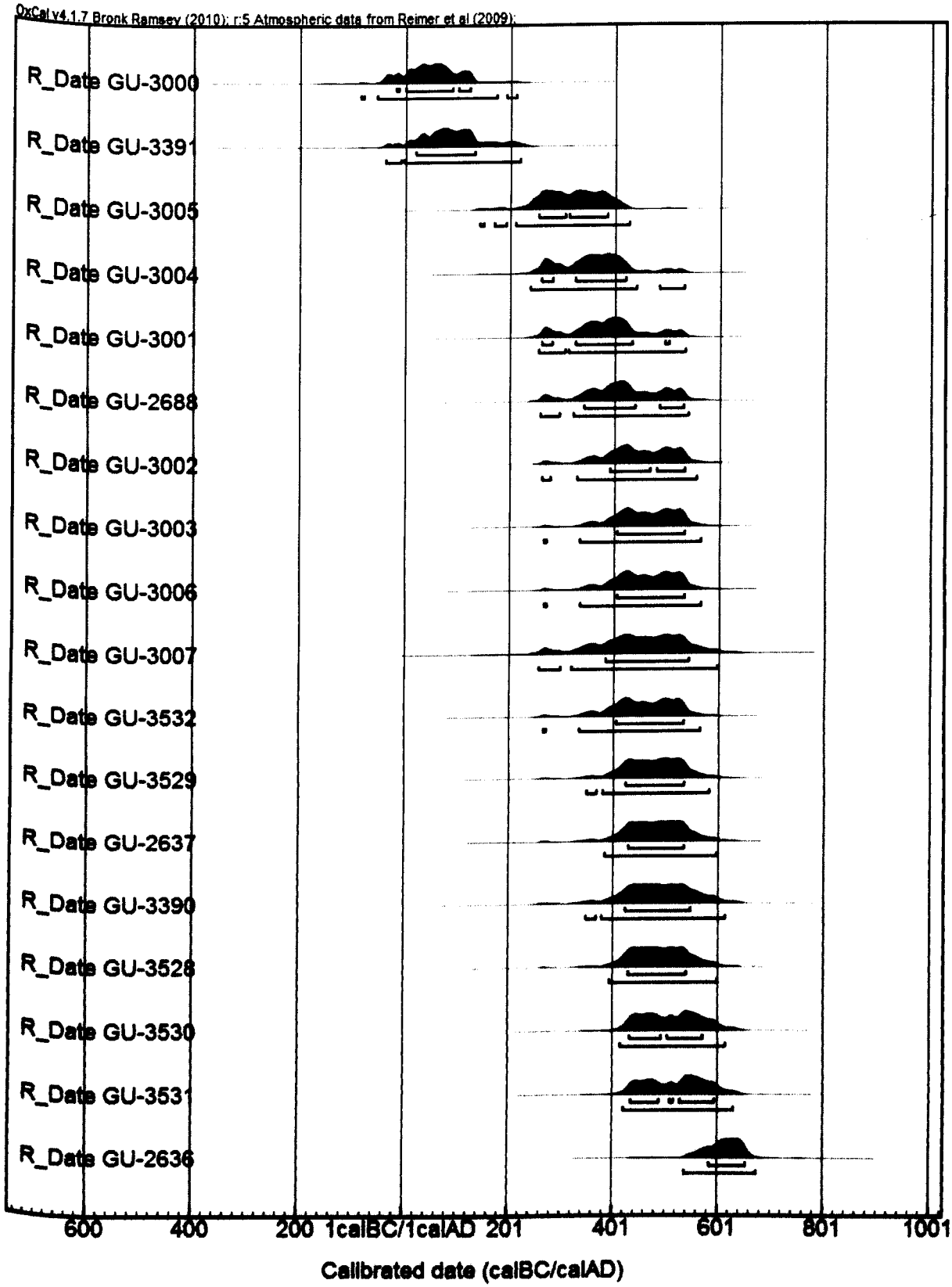


***Figure 3.5** Radiocarbon dates from Buiston in ascending chronological order.*

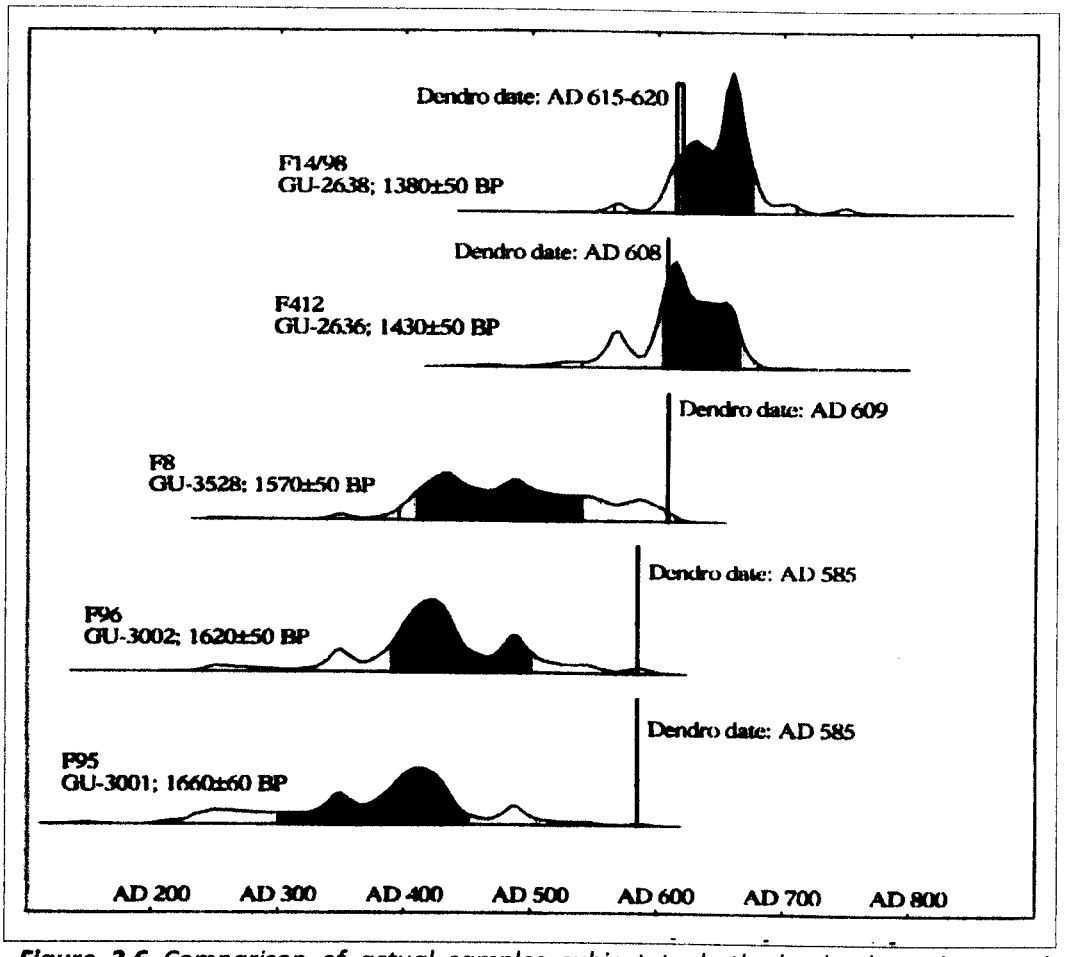


Figure 3.6 *Comparison of actual samples subject to both dendrochronology and radiocarbon dating methods (after Crone 2000).*

3.5.2 Island dwellings near Buiston: the 'forgotten crannogs'

With the given uncertainty surrounding Dark Age use in the south west, it is logical to examine crannogs in the area for dating evidence of activity immediately before or after this period. Despite the high density compared to other mainland areas, Buiston in particular (and Ayrshire in general) occupies a liminal location in the overall distribution of crannogs in Scotland; it is neither truly part of the south west concentration, nor is it any closer to the highland clusters in Argyll. The nearest density are the mainly LIA intertidal crannogs situated on the Clyde comprising the Langbank, Erskine and Dumbuck sites some 30km NNE (fig. 3.4). Therefore, the distribution of known islet sites in this region is relatively scattered or composed of largely unverifiable or uninvestigated antiquarian listings which can largely be attributed to major 18th/19th century drainage brought on by intensive reclamation efforts or new construction in the south west. Yet several crannogs have escaped recent investigation

from either the SWCS or the Argyll surveys as this area is overshadowed by higher concentrations to the north and south. Beyond Lochlea and Buiston, two very productive and key sites in Scottish archaeology, little has been done here despite the potential wealth of information on prehistoric and Early Historic islet use in Ayrshire.

The 'forgotten crannogs', or the rarely discussed and largely unknown sites in the NMRS, include Bog Hall (NS35 SE14); where worked timbers occasionally wash up along the local shore. Todhill Farm (NS24 SE10) revealed a number of large mortised timbers left in situ when it was apparently destroyed to build a now disused train bridge in the 19th century. Another potentially informative site is Craigie Mains (NS43 SW18), some 12km due south of Buiston, which was described as a small mound primarily of stone in the centre of the former loch where a logboat paddle was found after drainage. Perhaps most notable is Castle Semple Loch (NS35 NE6), in southern Renfrewshire, which has produced over 20 accounts of logboats (Mowat 1996) in both the Old and New Statistical Surveys (1791/1845) yet no definitive record has been made of an actual crannog in the loch. Nonetheless, from this point the picture improves in regards to verified or excavated examples near Buiston. Some 14km south east of Buiston is Lochlea, South Ayrshire which was excavated in 1878 by Munro (1880) after drainage which revealed multi-period occupation through the assemblage, spanning later prehistory with a stone axe, upper quernstones, spiral finger ring, jet armulets and RIA material: samian ware, melon beads and brooch, and at least the 9th, 16th and 17th centuries based upon a ringed pin and several iron implements (Laing 1975:25). Again, there was no conclusive indication of occupation immediately after the RIA until the 9th c., yet given the longevity of the site it is again likely that activity occurred between these periods, however sporadically. The site according to Munro's diagram was left perhaps 60% unexcavated and is still visible on aerial photos today from the uneven surface and varied vegetation c.20 metres from a roadway thus making the site a good candidate for sondage and radiocarbon assay the timber may not be in reasonable condition for dendrochronological sampling given the likely deterioration from drainage (fig. 3.8).

Also some 14km due east of Buiston lies Ashgrove Loch, excavated in 1868 (Smith 1894), situated 3.5 km from the North Ayrshire coast and 2.5 km from Todhill Farm. Given the nature of the site at c.20m in diameter alongside finds consisting of a quantity of bone tools,

Figure 3.7 *Stuart's 1866 map of Dowalton and how it appears today in aerial photos with possible revised locations (above). The antiquarian investigations were partial efforts and the sites appear relatively unmolested today. Given the richness of the assemblages and density of sites, this area would be worthwhile for a renewed, though difficult, investigation.*

Figure 3.8 *Modern situation of Lochlee in drained ground adjacent to road.*

Figure 3.9 *arly Historic island dwellings in Dumfries and Galloway: Milton Loch III, Dowalton I and Barean in relation to the Mote of Mark, a 'Dark Age' hillfort and other contemporary centres.*

hammerstones and perforated cannel coal it is of likely Iron Age origin. A pair of 'steel' sheep shears was also discovered along with structural remains of a kitchen midden and a 'water tank'. Unfortunately due to the nature of the excavation it is not clear from this terminology what exactly led the observers to arrive at their conclusions, or in fact if the shears were of relatively modern design. However, the site was encircled with a wall 30 feet in diameter and up to 9 feet in width which may provide clues as to the prehistoric nature of the structure within. The presence of 'up to five other crannogs in the loch' (Smith 1894: 60) was noted during the excavation but no investigations were made other than recent aerial photos which did not reveal any tangible evidence for this claim. Reviewing current aerial images of the area, the loch survives as an elongated body of water some 300m by 75m at maximum width. The former loch boundary, now dense bog, is considerably larger, 600 by 300m and would have been able to support numerous island dwellings. Although Ashgrove Loch borders several built-up modern settlements, the area itself remains largely undisturbed and is a potential area for future investigation. Thus, until a diagnostic artefact from the early sub-Roman Period up to c. 500AD appears or calibration methods are refined little ground can be made at present in establishing tangible occupation of island dwellings during this period in the south west. Chapter 4 will discuss four highland sites which also potentially date to this period in their geographical context: Loch Glashan, Ederline, Loch Drumellie and intertidal Redcastle on the Beauly Firth.

3.6 Early Historic island dwellings in the south west

3.6.1 'The crannog-infested loch of Dowalton...'

As discussed above, a clearly established Early Historic chronology for the later phase at Buiston is apparent. In addition, there are three other crannogs in the south west that solidly indicate EH occupation or activity: Dowalton I, Milton Loch III and Barean Loch. Dowalton I (fig. 3.7), excavated by Stuart in 1863, produced a 'Type G' penannular brooch along with part of a leather shoe, a wooden vessel and several iron axes which are of greatly varying origin, either Roman or sub-Roman (Stuart 1865; Munro 1882; Curle 1932; Fowler 1963; Wilson 2001). Buried underneath what was apparently a collapsed structure on the crannog was a 6.4m long logboat with a pegged back-board and remnants of thwarts and wash boards attached to the sides. The assemblage on Dowalton I did not produce any

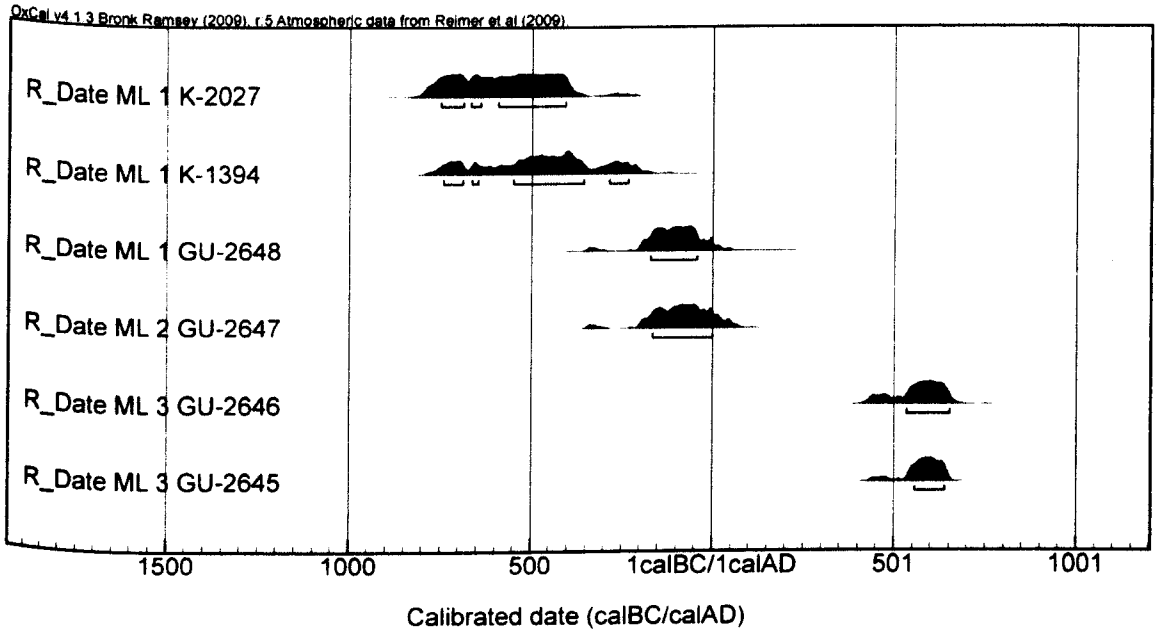


Figure 3.10 *Radiocarbon determinations from all sites in Milton Loch.*

convincingly pre-Roman material, yet the loch was undeniably a central place of importance with up to eight island dwellings containing a well-documented assemblage through to the Roman Iron Age.

Indeed, Hunter (1998: 117) when discussing native and Roman metalwork finds from Northern Britain, refers to the area as "The crannog-infested loch of Dowalton" due to the unusual intensity of crannogs within this loch which measured some 1300 by 400 metres at its largest extent before drainage in the late 19th century. This concentration of crannogs within a surface area of <1km^2 can be seen as a south-western example of 'nucleated island-settlement', provided occupation was contemporaneous and not one of sequential use. However, given the patterns of use and re-use demonstrated throughout Scotland in this thesis, it is highly unlikely that only one crannog was in use at a given point. Assuming the apparent Dark Age lapse in island dwelling use to be true, the considerably later return to Dowalton Loch, witnessed archaeologically at Dowalton I in particular, implies a continued awareness of the loch's former centrality and importance. In this spirit, Poller stresses the geographical importance of Dowalton as a boundary within the Bladenoch watershed, forming a division between the upper and lower Machars (2005: 222) yet a more realistic explanation is that the land around Dowalton and immediately to the south is of notably higher agricultural quality (Coppock 1976). Upon returning to the islands in Dowalton, the

remains of organic structures such as roundhouses on the existing sites would not have been readily recognisable and would appear overgrown if in fact there were any traces of structures still visible. Therefore, if we are to believe in an extended hiatus in crannog use, the oral traditions and local histories of the area were passed on through at least eight generations[8] before the loch was reused in earnest.

3.6.2 Milton Loch

Milton Loch III (NX87 SW15) was investigated by Nick Dixon in 1989; a pile radiocarbon dated returned a determination of 2060±50 BP (GU-2647; fig. 3.10). The basal diameter of the island is c. 30m, which is a constantly reappearing threshold when examining crannogs; a considerable number of artificial islands fall at or just below this range. No excavation has taken place at Milton Loch III yet the site is part of the Scotland Wetland Archaeology Programme (SWAP) of on-going environmental monitoring to assess the rate of decay for the exposed timbers. Again, when comparing the dates (and the assemblage from Milton Loch I) for all three crannogs in Milton Loch[9], a scenario similar to Dowalton is apparent. Although the calibration range for the earliest dates from Milton Loch I is large, especially given the large deviation, it nevertheless indicates a tradition of activity from the mid-first millennium BC to *at least* the RIA, followed by a hiatus, and finally discreet Early Historic activity once again.

This inherent memory of small islets serving as homes remains apparent throughout the phenomenon, whereby lochs such as Dowalton and Milton served as central places for constructing and living on small, nucleated groups of crannogs for over a thousand years. Barean Loch (NX85 NE3), some 30m in basal diameter, was initially investigated in the mid-19th century after drainage (Jardine 1865), and yielded two Roman cooking pots while in 1989, two radiocarbon assays returned dates of 2130 ±40 cal. BP (GU-2642) and 1400±50 cal. BP (GU-2641). The crannog in Barean Loch was re-visited under the SWAP initiative in 2003 to assess the degree of deterioration but the stone and timber crannog was not excavated. Thus a consistent scenario emerges with contrasting LIA and Early Historic radiocarbon

[8] 22 years is used here as a 'familial generation' based upon reproductive cycles in developing countries. 'Developed' countries such as the United States have an average of 25 years. (OECD Family Database 2008)

[9] The three crannogs in Milton Loch, while returning a wide range of dates, are built approximately 350m from one another and are situated on opposite sides of the two promontories which extended into the former loch.

assays, punctuated by the discovery of Roman material. Perhaps the most telling aspect of Barean Loch is the location which Munro describes as being located in a 'mountainous patch' (1882:37). This location, some 2.5km from a sheltered bay in the Solway Firth facing Cumbria, provides some suggestions as to why it was possibly re-occupied in the Early Historic Period as the Kingdom of Bernecia (*discussion below)* was expanding from the south; Crone (2000:160) discusses this Bernecian threat when discussing the similar chronology from Buiston and Milton Loch III which also coincide with a number of sites revealing Early Historic re-use after initial construction during the mid to late first millennium BC and first centuries AD. Dowalton certainly is among this group. Crucially, these stresses can be seen as influential factors which possibly prompted a return to the lochs in light of regional unrest and general insecurity.

3.6.3 Discussion: Early Historic island dwellings in relationship to the Mote of Mark

The radiocarbon dates from Milton Loch III, which extend into the early 6th century, fall overall very close to the 'suck and smear' range witnessed at Buiston. Despite these ambiguities in dating, the important issue here is the re-use of a crannog in a context with two earlier island dwellings dating to the later prehistoric and *at least* the Roman Iron Age, one of which was subject to more recent excavation techniques - Milton Loch I (Piggot 1953). Moving south, there are several important centres whose relationship to Early Historic island dwellings is important: The Mote of Mark, Trusty's Hill and Whithorn Abbey. Discussions of Milton Loch III, and especially Barean, must take into account the Mote of Mark (NX85 SW2), some 2km from Barean Loch (fig. 3.9).

The Mote of Mark overlooks the Urr Water where it empties into Auchencairn Bay on the Solway Firth between the modern towns of Kircudbright and Dumfries; the occupiers likely witnessed the advance of Bernecian Angles into the south west of Scotland if the site was not actually constructed by the Bernecians themselves (Laing *et al.* 2006: 166). The Mote of Mark can safely be considered a major hub of high-status activity in the 6th and 7th century based upon the recovered assemblages of numerous B, D, and E-ware sherds, imported glass and Mediterranean amphora sherds. In addition to this evidence of long distance trade contacts, the hillfort also served as a large-scale metalworking site; the clay 'bi-valve' and stone ingot moulds recovered would have cast dragon-headed pins, buckles, roundels, axe-

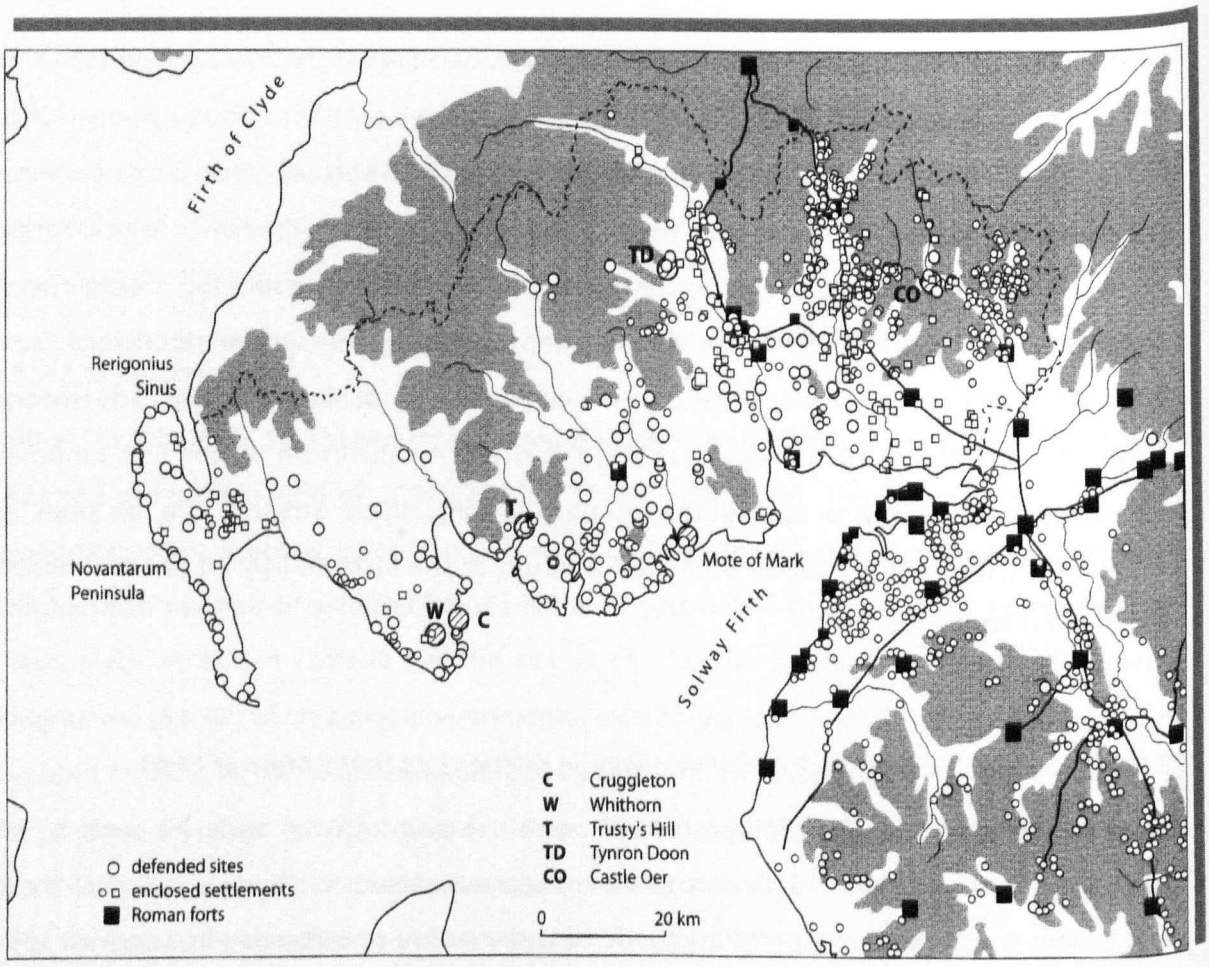


Figure 3.11 *Settlement classed as either later prehistoric or Early Historic in Dumfries and Galloway (after Laing et al. 2006).*

mounts and several different types of penannular brooches in various metals including gold (*ibid* 25). The glass finds in particular form one of the largest assemblages from this period in Western Britain, only exceeded locally by Whithorn Abbey, which also produced identical glass bi-conical cups indicating origins from the same Continental workshop (Campbell 2006: 105).

The site chronology indicates construction of a rampart sometime after c.550AD; the hillfort appears to have flourished until it was destroyed by a fire intense enough to produce partial vitrification of the ramparts in the later 7th century. Unlike Curle's earlier interpretation of occupation at a time when Vikings were 'infesting the creeks and estuaries of Western Scotland' (1914: 167), radiocarbon dating places the demise of the site some time between the supposed control of the Kingdom of Rheged over south west Scotland[10] until the

[10] Dunragit, a small village in Galloway, is believed to have derived from 'Dun of Rheged' thought others cite it as Welsh for 'Dun of the Rhagged', or 'Hags'. Either way, the evidence for Rheged occupation in south

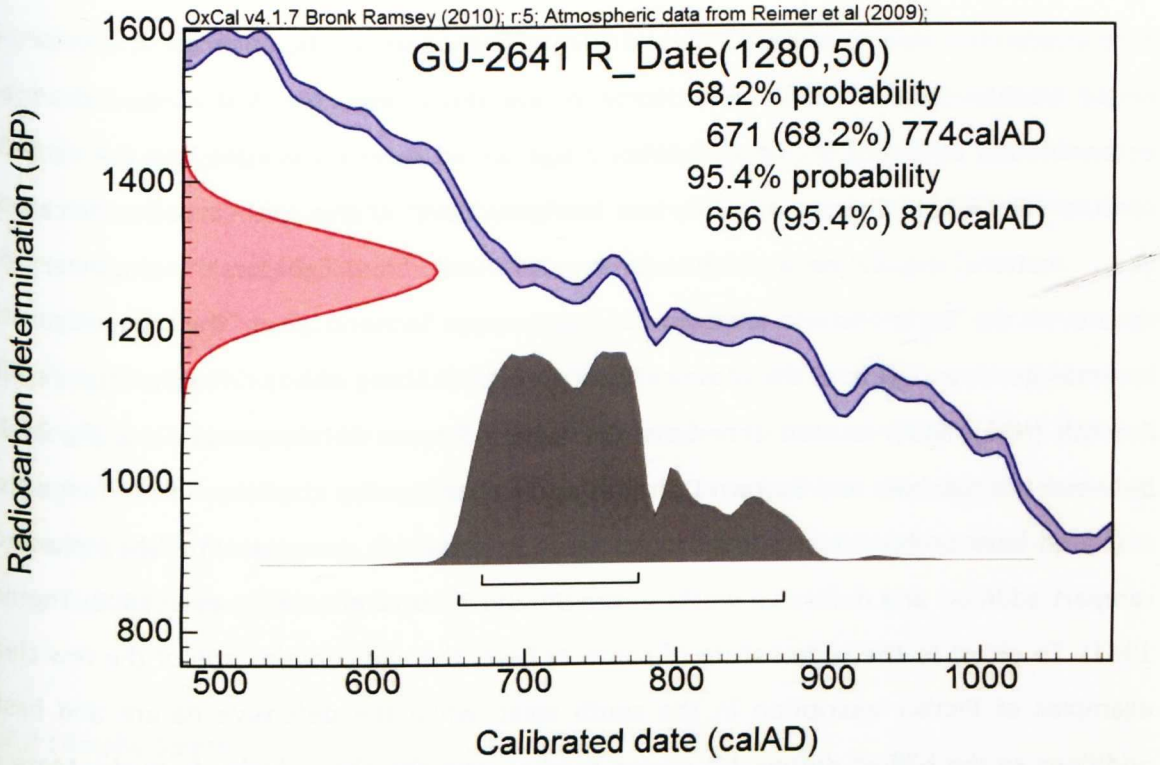


Figure 3.12 *Radiocarbon determination for GU-2641 at one and two σ from a timber found in Barean Loch which broadly corresponds with the historical Kingdom of Rheged and later Bernecian expansion into south west Scotland.*

Bernecian expansion sometime around the mid-seventh century AD. This expansion was initially violent with records of conflict between Rheged and Bernecia while intermarriage between the two early Kingdoms perhaps facilitated an assimilation of Rheged which fell under Northumbrian influence by 730AD (Dumville *in* Basset 1989: 220; Yorke 1990: 85). Given that Barean Loch is less than 2km from the Mote of Mark, while the radiocarbon date of a structural timber (fig. 3.12) coincides broadly with the decline of Rheged in the path of the Bernecians (or very close thereafter), it is worth considering the political instabilities which were prevalent at the time. In this context, the re-use of crannogs would once again have broad appeal (perhaps more apparent than real) as secure, defensive abodes, likely as independent homesteads for smaller extended families rather than boltholes for the larger community. In a sense, it is perhaps unimportant which political entity was waxing or waning; controversy exists as to whether or not Rheged actually gained control of south west Scotland (Armstrong *et al* 1950: 103; McCarthy 2002; Laing *et al.* 2006: 164). As a final consideration, if the Early Historic date for Barean Loch at 1280±50BP (GU-2641; SWCS 2004)

west Scotland is tenuous at best though the acceptance that Rheged occupied territory across the Solway Firth in Cumbria is well established. (Dumville *in* Basset 1989)

is re-interpreted due to discrepancies in the calibration curve experienced at Buiston, it would closely coincide with early Norse forays down into the Irish Sea; indeed an determination at 2 σ or 95.6% probability range would extend this date into the early 9th century (fig. 3.12). Therefore, while we currently have to live with broad radiocarbon determinations, excavation at Barean Loch would likely shed light on the character and nature of the Early Historic islet use in south west Scotland given the rich diagnostic assemblages found at both the Mote of Mark and at Whithorn Abbey. Finally, Trusty's Hill, Anwoth (NX55 NE2), located 1km from the former Roman Gatehouse of Fleet (fig 3.11), between the Machars and Eastern Dumfries and Galloway, was a substantial hillfort which indicated later prehistoric occupation, yet more important is an apparent rushed phase of rampart addition and defensive works in the 6th and 7th centuries (Allen *et al* 1903; Thomas 1961). To attest to the wide nature of contacts here, the site contains one of the few clear examples of Pictish inscription in the south west, while the defensive nature and hasty additions to the hillfort during this period meshes with the chronologies from the Mote of Mark, Barean and Buiston. This evidence only serves to add weight to arguments regarding undertones of a defensive nature in settlement activity during this time of shifting political boundaries. The fact that Trusty's Fort was vitrified by fire in the 7th century suggests the site met a similar fate to the Mote of Mark as well.

3.7 Environmental determinism, Christianity and the Vikings: The end of island dwelling construction during the first millennium AD

3.7.1 Changing Times

Fundamentally, this section will question the circumstances leading up to the 800-1100AD hiatus that appears in the Scottish island dwelling record in a south western context, and how this affected the society which re-emerged afterwards, subsequently returning to the tradition of living on water, albeit with less enthusiasm than that witnessed in the later prehistoric record. As both history and archaeology have shown, major shifts in belief systems and outside influences were witnessed in the second half of the first millennium AD; namely the expansion of Christianity and the Norse raids, to be followed by settlement. Within these broader frameworks, internecine conflict within the emerging nation of Scotland continued northwards in Argyll between the Picts and the Scotti throughout this

period (discussed in Ch. 4) These contacts are either documented in various contemporary accounts such as the Irish Annals, the *Annals of Ulster* in particular (Ritchie 1993:30), or through the changing material culture (i.e. E-Ware and imported metalwork). While many of these contacts were long-established throughout prehistory, it is only after 500AD that their effects are more clearly defined. In the settlement record, island dwelling activity appears to cease around the 9th century yet re-appears again around the end of the 11th century; it will be asked whether this resurgence is actually visible due to factors such as the spread of literacy and a subsequent increase of casual references, or the continuity of a 'cultural package' which survived, subsequently resulting in a return to the lochs. However, environmental influences can also be seen as propagators of social change, most notably in marginal areas throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

3.7.2 Climatic Stress

It is only after the 7th and 8th centuries throughout Scotland that a truly noticeable hiatus in island dwelling use becomes apparent; this lapse is markedly more substantial compared to the sub-Roman hiatus discussed above. The upper end of the final radiocarbon date from the first millennium AD is from Barean Loch (GU-2641), discussed above. In the 1990s, evidence emerged that environmental causes may have played a substantial role in the changing landscape. As the result of several catastrophic volcanic eruptions in the 6th and 7th centuries which shrouded the atmosphere in ash, a discreet period of forest regeneration was observed in the dendrochronological record. Corresponding with this sequence, Baillie (1995:89) reels off a list of specific maladies in the historical record which beset the Northern Hemisphere after 536AD: references to Irish famine in 536AD and 539AD (also in 664-668AD, below), high rates of mortality in the British Isles, peaks in ice-core acidity and poor celestial visibility noted by observers as far away as China. These events are contemporary with, or closely follow, 'narrowest ring events' or times of virtually zero tree growth. This deterioration in agricultural conditions has obvious implications for the ability of the structures which underpin society to function properly. As well as food production, climatic stress would have had a direct impact upon societies during this period, particularly in the more marginal zones of Northern Britain. These events coincide with a tangible population collapse after the 6th century AD in Britain (Burgess 1989).

At Buiston, the last tree-ring dates from building activity, not coincidentally, fall between 664-668AD during an outbreak of widespread plague noted in the Irish *Annals of the Four Masters*, (fig. 3.13). Given the location in a busy maritime context and the nature of contact through trade networks, plague outbreaks recorded in Ireland could have easily reached the coastal communities along the Solway Firth, extending northwards along the Ayrshire coast. Crone readily acknowledges this event (2000:161) which is reflected in the dendrochronological record as a complete absence of building activity between 664 and 722AD (Baillie 1995: 128). Having considered this, it is altogether more challenging to determine exactly what impact this had on a regional scale in the south west. Nonetheless, it correlates with a noticeable lapse in the use of island dwellings as evidenced by the lack of dates following this period.

3.7.3 The spread of Christianity: Whithorn and the Machars island dwellings

Perhaps one of the largest influences upon the 'worldview' of indigenous people in south west Scotland was the influence of Christianity, yet this influence has not been discussed in the context of the island dwelling tradition. The establishment of monastic communities between Ireland and the western Scottish coast is well documented from the late 5th century onwards (Crawford 1987; Ritchie 1993; Graham-Campbell *et al.* 1998; Richter 1999; MacArthur 2001). Of particular interest here is Whithorn Abbey, located some 5km north of the Isle of Whithorn and one of the major centres of the Early Christian movement eclipsed only by Iona between 597-807AD. Whithorn was reported to have been built by St. Ninian around 397AD where an early community of Christians had already begun to gather; it is understood to be the earliest monastic site in Scotland. In the surrounding landscape, some 18 predominately later prehistoric island dwellings, including the nucleated sites of Dowalton, Elrig and Rough Loch, are located within 15km of Whithorn (figs. 3.11 & 3.14). It is perhaps easy to imagine a correlation between the arrival of Christianity to western Scotland and the abandonment of island dwellings during the crannog 'Dark Age' (c. 300-500AD), with their associated pagan rituals and apparent reverence for watery places, yet the reality of settlement patterns and the continuity of long-established cultural traits render this simplistic interpretation less tenable. A more realistic interpretation sees a reciprocal degree of interaction between the religious community at Whithorn and indigenous groups, who themselves or recent ancestors likely occupied crannogs, is certain to have occurred on more

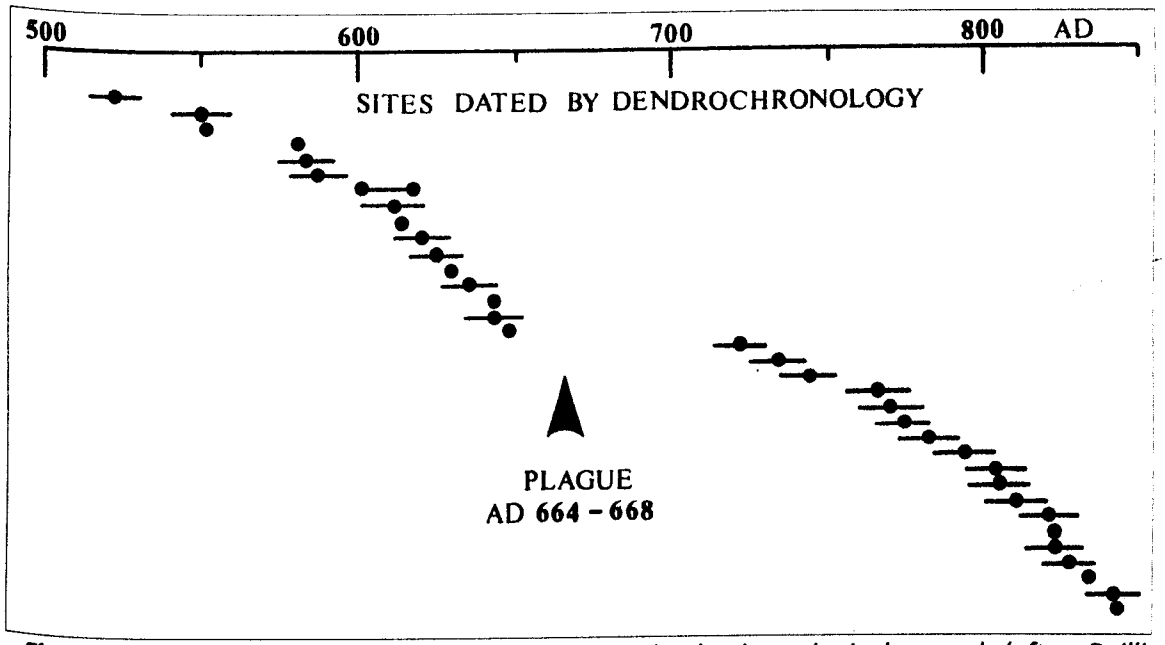


Figure 3.13 *Gap in timber use visible in the dendrochronological record (after Baillie 1995:128).*

than a cursory level given the restricted peninsular geography of the Machars. This does not necessarily imply an enthusiastic, widespread adoption of Christianity on the part of the local population. Indeed, no items of a clearly religious nature have been found from neighbouring crannogs despite the extent to which Whithorn developed. However, the ability of the monastic community to thrive here while having open use of a port some 5km away suggests an amicable exchange, or at the very least indifference, between indigenous people and an arriving community of outsiders which would have also contained growing numbers of arriving community of outsiders which would have also contained growing numbers of travellers on pilgrimage[11].

Conversely, there is no evidence (or apparent need) to suggest that Early Christian practices would have actively discouraged a island dwelling tradition, other than a possible realignment of associated polytheistic rituals to a more acceptable form in the Christian vein. Excavations at Loch Glashan, Argyll produced leather remnants which have recently been re-interpreted as a book satchel or case, the implication being that it held an early copy of the bible or a religious text (Crone & Campbell 2005). If this interpretation is correct, then the

[11] An example of an early tourist trade? Those arriving on pilgrimage would perhaps have been met by locals at the Isle of Whithorn where wide-ranging items would have been bartered in exchange for food, drink or other commodities. In an economic sense, a monastery would have been welcomed, rather than contested, by local inhabitants to boost the economy hence the trade-based settlement witnessed in the archaeological record (below).

Figure 3.14 *The Early Christian centre of Whithorn in relation to mainly later prehistoric island dwellings in the Machars.*

implications for the conversion to Christianity of those who used island dwellings becomes more tangible in the material record (*see* Ch. 4). Instead, it is my belief, based upon the archeological record, that around the mid-first millennium AD, island dwelling occupation clearly undergoes an overall reduction in numbers while shifting towards a more restricted population as political power becomes increasingly structured or imported trends shaped settlement tastes. This 'restricted population' however, is *not* an elite, but perhaps a middle class that was allowed to use existing crannogs with the caveat that they were available as retreats in the uncertain political climate of the 6th and 7th centuries. As a result, island dwellings leading up to the Early Historic Period and into the Norse incursions were no longer occupied on the scale seen in the prehistoric landscape where they served as homesteads or summer retreats of local small scale landholders.

3.7.4 Scandinavian Contact: Interruption or Inconsequential?

The history of the Viking impact upon Northern Britain is well documented and discussed in numerous accounts of this popular topic; here only those aspects which relate to the apparent absence of island dwelling use will be discussed. Overall, the impact of early Viking raids beginning around 794-795AD seem to have largely by-passed the south west; this is likely due to more attractive targets elsewhere along the west coast and the Irish Sea. From modern day Kircudbright westwards, little evidence of Norse activity is visible in the archaeological or historical record of Galloway, save for a handful of placenames and stray finds (Ritchie 1993: 95; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 106). This is altogether unusual in that the region as a whole was highly attractive to the Norse: the Isle of Man, Cumbria, and Ireland to Argyll. It also appears that the Abbey at Whithorn also escaped the attention of the Norse, though by the mid-9th century, while in decline, the abbey was ringed by evidence of growing Hiberno-Norse influenced settlement; this influence appear to have steadily increased by the 11th century archaeologically in the form of rectangular timber houses similar to those in Viking Dublin and items suggesting a flourishing mercantile-based trade economy continued to persist until at least the 13th century (Ritchie 1993: 99; Hill 1997).

What impact the Scandinavian influence had on insular traditions regarding island dwellings is perhaps inconsequential; use here is seen to have sharply declined just prior to the first historical notices of the Scandinavians and the development of proto-urban settlement in areas of the south west had taken on a decidedly Continental or Scandinavian appearance by this time. Beyond the Machars, however, two indicators of Norse influence which directly affect the south west are worth noting. First is a historical reference from the *Chronicle of Man* citing an instance in 1098 where Magnus Barelegs took control of the Isle of Man; he ordered (or 'compelled' according to the translation) the inhabitants of Galloway to bring him their timber to the shore of Man for the construction of defensive fortifications (Goss 1874). This reign extended along much of the western seaboard of Britain from Anglesey to Orkney while this level of control over estates in Galloway has direct implications, not only for the structuring of society, but the direct availability of resources in the area.

Another facet of Scandinavian impact upon the south west is the concentrations of *–by* or *-byr* placenames witnessed in the inner area of the Solway Firth (fig. 3.16). The high

concentration along Eastern Dumfries and Galloway meshes almost precisely with the beginning of the island dwelling distribution in Dumfries and Galloway while the remaining areas are marginal coastal sites or near modern Kircudbright, an area void of island dwellings. What this distribution implies, if the assumption that island dwelling activity has ceased is correct, is the continuation of a distinct cultural affiliation to the west of Danish placenames if one closely examines both distributions. However, in the hinterland away from the Machars and the coast, a glimpse of the tradition is seen to have survived.

3.7.5 Later Medieval and Post-Medieval island dwelling Use in the South West

After limited Scandinavian settlement was established in the south west, evidence for island dwelling use is resurrected by a series of two very close radiocarbon dates from timbers at Lochrutton (NX87 SE3) which centre around the early 13th century (fig. 3.15). This is reinforced by the discovery of a cross stylistically dated to this period and inscribed with the letters 'IHS' (Barbour 1906). This crannog survives as an apparently mortised timber frame capped by boulders, measuring some 24m in diameter at the top and 40m at the base, and contained *Quercus* timbers up to 40cm in diameter (Henderson *et al* 2003). As early excavation did not reach the initial 'floor' surface it was suspected that the site predated the medieval occupation, yet thus far, the radiocarbon assays and material assemblage do not indicate earlier use. Three other island dwellings in the south west have associated material dating to this period. Loch Urr or 'Rough Island' (NX 78 SE2) some 18km NE of Lochrutton, is a comparatively large (53x23m oval) crannog which was reported to have substantial linear drystone remains visible in the late 18th century (including possible 'towers') while a small sherd of red wheel turned pottery was recovered and a partial logboat was noted submerged adjacent to the site (Corrie 1906; Henderson, *et al.* 2003). Some 20m away is another smaller (18m/dia.) crannog that has no indication of structural material on the surface, but was discovered to also be of an artificial nature.

4km due south of Lochrutton is Loch Arthur (NX96 NW1), which consists of an artificial submerged *packwerk* mound of timber and organic material topped with large boulders. The site is approximately 25m in diameter and was first investigated in 1874 (Gillespie 1876) while later sondages were placed by Williams and Truckell in 1966-7 (Williams 1971:121). Green glazed pottery from the crannog and a bronze cooking tripod just south of the crannog

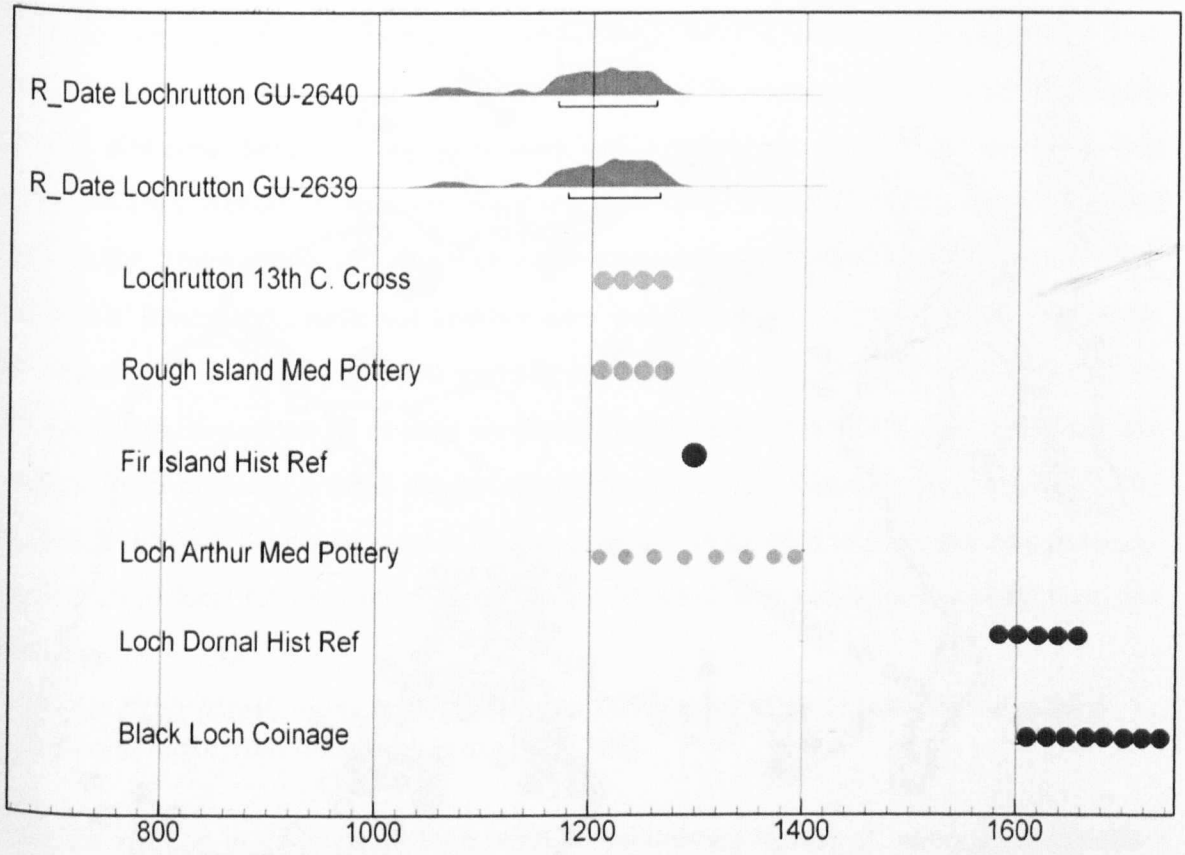


Figure 3.15 *Radiocarbon, historical and artefactual dates AD from the resumed medieval use of south west island dwellings after the 800-1100AD hiatus.*

were recovered from this site which has prehistoric origins based upon two radiocarbon dates from timbers (GU-2643 & GU-2644); a logboat was recovered on the south shore in the late 19th century which subsequently has been radiocarbon dated to the 2nd Century AD (SRR-403; Mowat 1996: 52). The pottery from the crannog dates to the 13th or 14th centuries while Williams estimates the tripod to be of 15th century date. This broadly places later activity on the site between 1200-1500AD, while the descriptions of the remaining structural foundations were possibly part of a stone undercroft for a timber structure (Williams 1971:123). Moving west, two sites on the Ayrshire-Galloway border also have tentative Medieval or Post-Medieval references: Loch Maberry (NX27 NE1), and Loch Dornal (NX27 NE5). Queries by Ordnance Survey in 1976 report a local tradition that the monks of Glenluce Abbey (c. 1190AD-1560AD), some 20km SW, created a leper colony at Loch Maberry during the abbey's life (RCAHMS 2011a); Truckell reports numerous drystone foundations which divided the area in addition to remnants of a drystone wall around the island which lends some credence to medieval use here (1963). Loch Dornal (23m dia.) is some 1400m NE of Loch Maberry and is shown in Blaeu's Atlas of 1654AD; however, it is believed to have come

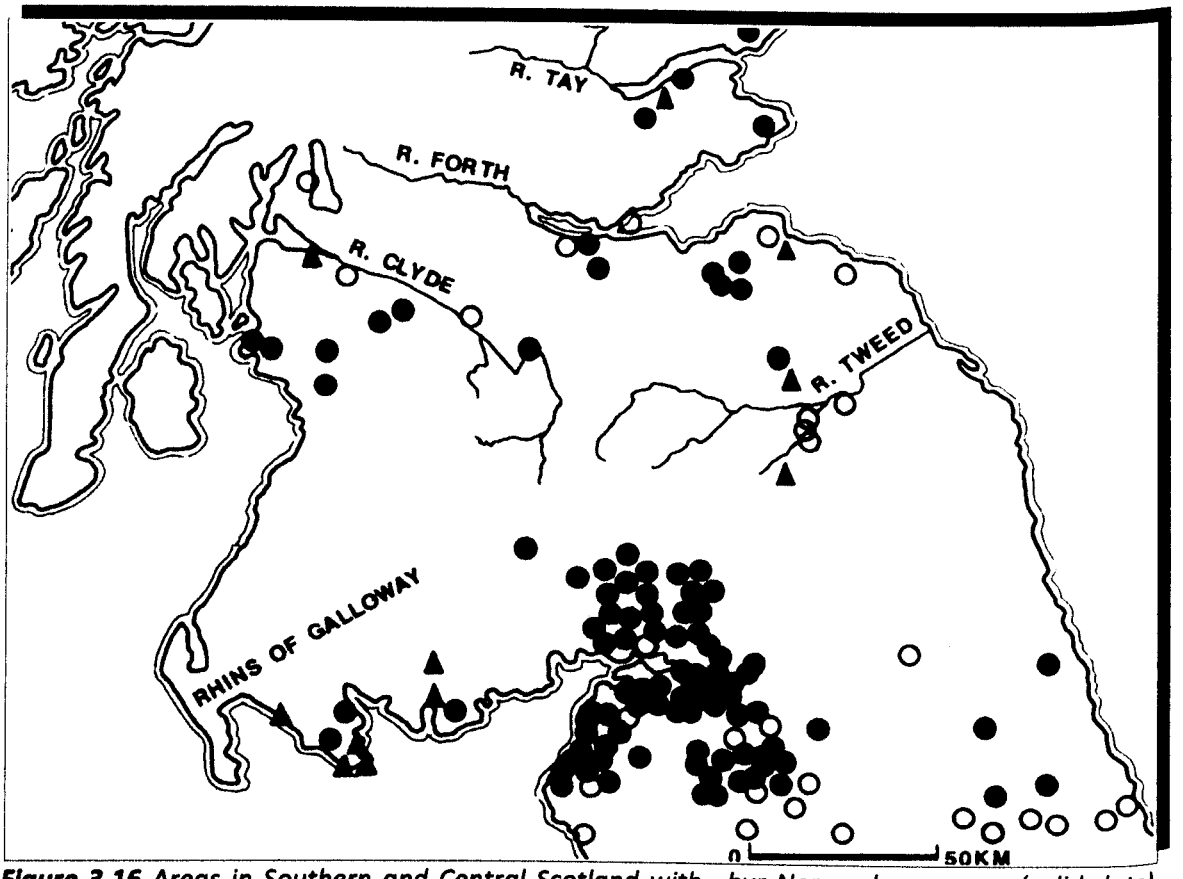


Figure 3.16 *Areas in Southern and Central Scotland with –byr Norse place-names (solid dots), 'hogback' funerary monuments (open), and areas of Norse finds (triangles). (*after *Ritchie 1993:82).*

from Pont's earlier map dating to c.1580-90AD based upon recent research on Medieval islets (Raven *et al.* 2004: 120). Underwater inspection of the island revealed it to be a natural island that was substantially modified while examination of the surface indicated a number of drystone foundations in addition to 15th or 16th century pottery.

3.7.6 The Evidence for Fir Island and Carlingwark Loch: Medieval Activity

Fir Island (NX76 SE9), 18km SW of Lochrutton also plays a key part in a discussion of Medieval islet use in the south west. Located in the southern end of Carlingwark Loch, Fir Island is mentioned in the *Name Book* (1847: 22,36) which relates local folklore stating that Edward I in AD 1300 had an iron forge built here to shoe his cavalry horses. Ordnance Survey inspectors in February, 1963 (RCAHMS 2011c) could not see any forge during a walkover visit, yet they also relate how the site was covered with 'abundant' snow and ice – frankly impossible conditions to establish the presence of all but the most apparent archaeological features. Rather than dismissing local legends, an examination of the *Old Statistical Account*

reveals compelling evidence for substantial Medieval activity both in and around the loch. First, a robust stone and timber causeway connecting Fir Island was described in the *OSA* (1791-9: 304-306). Secondly, the loch level was substantially lowered by some 10 feet (3.05m) in 1765 in order to obtain marl for the local fields. When the lochbed was examined at the outlet, 'there was found a dam of stone, moss and wood, designed for the deepening of the loch' (*ibid:* 305), while yet another dam was discovered at the northern end of the loch near Castle Douglas, at a point partially covered by Wade's military road works of the 1720s and 30s. A number of objects were discovered below the north dam including stag heads, a 'brass pan' and a 'brass dagger' measuring some 22in (56cm) in length (prehistoric- see p. 122 below). Finally in regards to the possible forge, and to highlight the potential importance of local folklore when researching islet sites, this was also described from the deposits:

> *...about this [dam], many horseshoes were found, sunk deep in the mud, of quite a different make from those now in use (ibid:* 306).

Given the location in Carlingwark Loch, with an established history of crannog construction and metalwork finds, it would be surprising if the island had *not* been the centre of activity at some point in the loch's history while the original accounts, now some 250 years old, provide information that creates a compelling case for Medieval activity.

3.8 Discussion

3.8.1 Island dwelling distributions in Dumfries and Galloway

When examining the distribution of island dwellings in the south west, an east-west division between the two concentrations of crannogs in Dumfries and Galloway is readily apparent (fig. 3.17). The western half is tightly clustered in the Machars region; only eight exist outside this area in the Rhins and near the modern town of Stranraer. Concurrently, while the eastern cluster is not as consolidated it does centre upon Milton Loch and Loch Arthur (6.5km apart), with Carlingwark and Barean forming outliers towards the Solway Firth. Only two sites of differing validity, Cairniehill Loch (NX 64 NW30) and Newlaw (NX74 NW21) may be found between these two groups and are each located less than 3km from the Solway Firth. Cairniehill is especially dubious as the site existed in local oral knowledge; when Coles (1893:131) investigated the drained loch he could find no trace of a island dwelling despite

the presence of a promontory fort on the margins of the former loch. Accounts of Newlaw (RCAHMS 1914:241) provide evidence of a structure with mortised timber framework and flagstones appearing in the centre of a drained 'meadow'; a bronze pot whose description resembles a Roman cooking vessel was recovered but subsequently lost. The main factor affecting this distribution is the topography of the region which is divided by the Galloway Hills extending from South Ayrshire to within several kilometers of the Solway Firth effectively creating a natural barrier between the two areas. While this strengthens the case for the deliberate location of crannogs in areas of good agricultural potential, à la Morrison 1985, modern human activity (i.e. drainage) is largely responsible for the discovery of many crannogs in the fertile belt which surrounds the higher, more marginal areas. This history of discovery has likely created an artificial distribution given there exist at least 20 large lochs in marginal areas such as the Galloway Hills that escaped major drainage works of the 18th and 19th centuries.

3.8.2 Variability and Function

One of the major themes that underpin this thesis is the degree of continuity and re-use witnessed throughout the island dwelling tradition, namely a tradition which brought people back to the lochs repeatedly over two millennia or more in the south west. This continuity is not necessarily static; it is less visible at times throughout history, namely during the 'Dark Age' and the Norse Period, yet overall it remains persistent. As research continues, these gaps will likely be narrowed yet it is stressed that events, especially after the 6th century, did contribute to a decline in use that never recovered to the levels of activity seen during the later prehistoric period. The earliest island dwelling construction in the south west, broadly coinciding with a gradual shift towards monumentality in domestic structures following the Late Bronze Age, reflects the desire for conspicuous and increasingly complex homes in the landscape; as we have seen this phenomenon was widely accepted throughout the south-west. There is an inherent degree of status to monumental structures, whether they are artificial islands, brochs, duns or stone roundhouses. All require a considerable expenditure of labour invested over a substantial period of time and reflect the desire of the occupants to express their individual tastes and identities. Moreover, the variety of construction methods – natural, 'semi' artificial and fully artificial - seen in the south-western Scottish island dwelling record now reveals sites which cannot be easily situated within popular Victorian

classification schemes that were relied upon until quite recently (Munro 1882; Morrison 1985; Henderson 1998).

The exclusion of 'fortified islands' and 'island dwellings', i.e. sites which display a wide range of artificiality, in crannog studies leaves an important segment of the island dwelling tradition from the fuller view. A remaining question concerns how crannogs relate to contemporaneous terrestrial structures, whether they are simply unenclosed settlements or technologically more complex Atlantic dwellings such as Teroy or Stairhaven: are they indicative of a 'cultural package'? There is no single, distinct reason why people were compelled to construct and live upon islets, while evidence for association to terrestrial sites currently remains tenuous in the statistical sense, as no convincing correlation between island dwellings and terrestrial sites has been demonstrated thus far (Morrison 1985; Holley 2000; Poller 2005; Cavers 2006). However, based upon the discussion above, there is a visible association that becomes clearer in the Early Historic Period with sites such as Barean Loch and the Mote of Mark, while the location of the early Christian community of Whithorn in the centre of the Machars indicates a degree of receptiveness to changing belief systems, i.e. monotheism, amongst the local island inhabitants, though it was by no means wholesale or without any resistance (Smith 1996: 25).

3.8.3 *Later Prehistoric Use*

There may undoubtedly be a degree of exclusivity and status to living on an island, highly visible for anyone passing along the shores of a loch, in addition to an obvious defensive superiority (discussed below). Watery places were significant during the Bronze and Iron Ages, yet for exactly what particular reason cannot be stated with authority although it certainly revolved around ritual practices which deified natural elements, many of which were included in the pantheon of later prehistoric 'Celtic' Gods. Rivers, lakes, pools and wells have long been associated with not only the essence of life but also the 'otherworld' and sources of healing (Geddes 1999:478). These 'watery places' were often viewed in recent histories as marginal places, forgotten as a primary means of travel. Surely, lochs where numerous subsequent generations lived must not have been perceived as completely alien or foreboding. This view can perhaps be seen as a holdover from Victorian influences (contemporaneous with early antiquarian investigation) as a fear of the sea and perhaps

water in general pervaded the common psyche during that time. It is apparent that lochs were not entirely unwelcoming places to people in later prehistory - otherwise crannogs simply would not have been constructed there, especially over such a long time-span.

One generally reliable aspect of crannog location within lochs in relation to the surrounding landscape is proximity to arable land or pasture, an idea put forth by Morrison (1985: 74) who was trained as a geographer and Henderson (1998), although there are always exceptions when discussing island dwellings. The situation of occupied islets in the Inner Hebrides and Western Isles in locations that are clearly unsuitable for agriculture such as Loch Allallaidh, Islay and Loch Sgubain, Mull which are located at altitude in the interior near mountain passes, far from arable land and are heavily defended with substantial stone-walling indicating a 'bolthole' function rather than serving as a homestead (Holley 2000: 98). It must be said that the vast majority of island dwellings in Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire are not nearly as isolated. In relation to the physical landscape in regards to subsistence activities in the south west, an area comparatively rich in suitable agricultural and pastoral land, building in lochs surrounded by arable land was the standard based upon the currently known distribution. As the archaeological evidence consistently tells us, pastoral and agricultural activities regularly took place on crannogs. This is evidenced by the recovery of emmer (*Triticum dicoccum),* wheat (*Triticum)* and rye (*Secale)* from sites such as Elrig Loch I which also contained sheep and goat droppings, indicating a similar, domestic focus similar to Oakbank Crannog (Dixon 2004: 163).

Variations in design aspects also raise questions about the function of this early wave of island dwellings. The layout of the crannog at Barhapple Loch is unusual in that there is evidence for two causeways which has been explained as a possible indicator of multiphase activity although there is no other evidence for secondary construction (Cavers 2010: 191). I would suggest that the existence of multiple causeways is perhaps indicative of activity such as sheep shearing whereby animals would have entered via one causeway, and exited by the other. This method of channelling activity would be considerably more functional and practical than trying to allow pedestrian and livestock access through one point. Again, evidence such as ards recovered from Cult's Loch III (Cavers *forthcoming),* Oakbank (Dixon 2004: 152) and Milton Loch (Piggot 1953: 143) are clear indicators of an agricultural focus

associated with island dwellings from the later prehistoric period; conjecture about any ritual deposition of ards is difficult to ascertain as it is probable that they were merely part of the occupational level or were perhaps discarded without particular thought. Another site indicating pastoral activity is Lochlee, Tarbolton. Among the many objects recovered was an iron and bronze bridle bit and "the skeleton of an animal like that of a goat or a sheep, the skull of which was entire and had short horn cores attached to it" (Munro 1882: 78, 95); with the addition of quern stones this indicates the homesteading capabilities of prehistoric islet dwellers. The presence of a sawblade[12] and iron shears at Lochlee only highlights the continuing use of island dwellings as homesteads into the Early Historic Period.

Carlingwark Loch is an important site for not only prehistoric discussions, but reuse and the concept of 'intensity' around loch margins (Fredengren 2002: 113). Material finds range from the Neolithic to Late-Medieval Period and indicate not only a long period of interaction with the loch but also LBA/EIA contact on at least a regional scale. The 1765 partial drainage of the loch, and subsequent noting of the discoveries shortly afterwards, have effectively prevented Carlingwark from sliding into obscurity (p. 115 above). Besides the probable Medieval items recovered, a late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age knife of 'English river flint' (Penman 1991: 16) was found in the loch at an unknown point before 1765. Moving to the metalwork, the dagger discovered beneath the dam was in fact a sword identified as a Ewart Park variant (c.750-850BC), a 'Northern Step 1' which had the tip broken off (Burgess & Colquhoun 1988: 90). This is the exact type discovered in the late 19th century along a coastal loch near Iochdar in South Uist (*ibid* 99-100), some 370km NW. This rare type of sword has also turned up in Edinburgh during late 19th century construction at 7, 8 Grosvenor Crescent (NT27SW16) amongst a large hoard of 14-15 swords estimated to be deposited around 550BC (Coles 1962:118). A number of Northern Step 1 swords were also recovered (*cf* Burgess & Colquhoun 1988) from the following sites: Keith Marischal House in Midlothian (NT46SW14), Brechin, Angus (NO65NW1), Killeonan near Campbeltown, Argyll & Bute (NR61NE 13), Lyndale, Isle of Skye (NG35SE6), Moss of Cowie, (NO89SE12) and finally Balnagubs (NO89SE15); tellingly both of these findspots are former lochs in Aberdeenshire 4km apart (fig. 3.18). Therefore, not only is the example from Carlingwark the most southerly find of

[12]The use of the saw apparently came and left with the Romans, not to be reintroduced into Britain until after the Norman invasion some seven centuries later (Damian Goodburn, *pers. comm*).

Figure 3.17 *Oblique views overlooking island dwellings in the Machars delineated by the natural division created by the Galloway hills; the top view is looking due west and (below) east.*

this type, it is part of a very discreet group that nevertheless has a tremendously wide distribution throughout Scotland.

There is also another observation to be made here: all were found *no further* than 12km from the coast. If one counts navigable rivers which lead to the coast, this average drops to only 1.57km (fig. 3.19). As the Ewart Park Phase marks an intensification of large-scale metalwork

deposition and hoarding in Scotland (Cunliffe 2005: 586), it is perhaps not surprising to note that seven out of nine findspots are also lochs or former lochs, while the sword from Grosvenor Crescent in Edinburgh was located on the crest of a gentle hill and was part of a sizeable hoard – one likely meant for recovery. The last remaining sword from Keith Marischal House, which sits on an escarpment overlooking a large burn, was only noted as 'found near the house' (Coles 1962: 119) so the exact context will remain unknown.

The point of this brief diversion from island dwellings is as follows: first, it is clear from the information above that all the swords likely made their way from centres of production to their final spot via boats (and waterways) of some description. The fact that tin is required in the first place to even produce the swords alludes to the distances these objects may have travelled in their lives. Secondly, the fact that these nine findspots are within an area that covers nearly 90,000km^2, more than the total landmass of Scotland itself, speaks clearly in regards to the mobility of LBA/EIA people within and around the Scottish landscape – a time when the construction of artificial islets begins in earnest. Whether these mobile folk behind the swords happened to be Continental merchants, Cornish tin miners or indigenous warriors remains to be established, yet it is difficult to imagine that many island dwellers were not amongst the lot, especially considering the number of logboats associated with islet sites in Scotland. While the understanding that long-distance trade was in place during the Bronze Age is not a new one, recent excavation of shipwrecks at Langdon Bay and Salcombe in Devon carrying bronze scrap only underscore this dynamic (Needham & Parham 2006). Finally, the prehistoric decision regarding where to live on water was not a random choice. The creation of artificial islets themselves alludes to this. Yet on a larger scale, the location of prehistoric islets in relation to inland waterway access or even direct sea access itself becomes much more evident when all the evidence for contact and mobility is considered.

3.8.4 The Roman Iron Age

Entering the Roman Iron Age, there are, rather unsurprisingly, finds of Roman artefacts at sites such as Milton Loch, Dowalton, Barean, Black Loch, Hyndford, Friar's Carse, Carlingwark, Lochlee and Lochspouts (Wilson 1872: Munro 1882: 68; 1899: 373; Piggot 1953:150; Cavers 2006: 215). This contrasts with the relative lack of discreetly datable material culture before this period. The arrival of Roman goods has, however, often been interpreted to imply an increase in status amongst crannog occupants or a change in the function of crannogs

themselves in the first centuries AD (Cavers 2010: 214), yet in reality this only indicates an initial phase of imported Roman goods, perhaps offered or traded to the indigenous peoples in hopes of gaining favour or taken outright by the Selgovae or Novante as plunder. Evidence of the military nature of these finds is indicated by the recovery of bronze patera, personal cooking pans used almost exclusively by Roman soldiers on the move, at Dowalton Loch (Stuart 1865: 119; Bishop *et al,* 2006:119) which perhaps rightly suggests that primary contact was not with traders but soldiers in this 'fringe' of a vast Roman empire. Subsequent finds of datable Roman items steadily tapers off in the late 2nd and 3rd centuries AD indicating the reduction in either contact or the desire to placate inhabitants with exotic imports (*see* Cavers 2010: 216) as indigenous peoples, especially in Galloway, were on the periphery of the Roman world and were likely not of tremendous importance in the overall political scheme of Rome.

Taking the stance that the appearance of Roman goods was purely a matter of contact, the status of crannog dwellers themselves would not have changed to any appreciable degree during the Roman Iron Age, while the islands would have continued to act as defended or monumental homesteads with the exception of an increase in the frequency of metalwork upon island dwellings, a notion that contradicts current views on the potential emergence of crannogs as status sites during this time period. Sites of considerable status do exist in the later record, such as Lagore in Co. Meath, Ireland which provided dates between the 7th and 11th centuries AD (Edwards 1990), yet such sites are geographically (though not conceptually) outside the focus of this paper. The defensive characteristics of crannogs, intrinsically inherent due to their situation in lochs, remains constant throughout the time frame of this paper, as causeways were treacherous affairs to the uninitiated, while deliberately missing sections or gaps, found at Barhapple indicate some manner of retractable access from the earliest use of these sites (Munro 1885, Morrison 1985:54; Dixon 2004).

A hitherto unmentioned explanation for the presence of Roman material from a relativist perspective is quite simply that crannogs were temporarily occupied, or at least visited, by small patrols of expeditionary Roman soldiers themselves, perhaps using islets as 'field expedient' refuges when pushing into potentially unfriendly areas. In all likelihood, Roman soldiers arriving in the late 1st century AD to the south west of Scotland would have

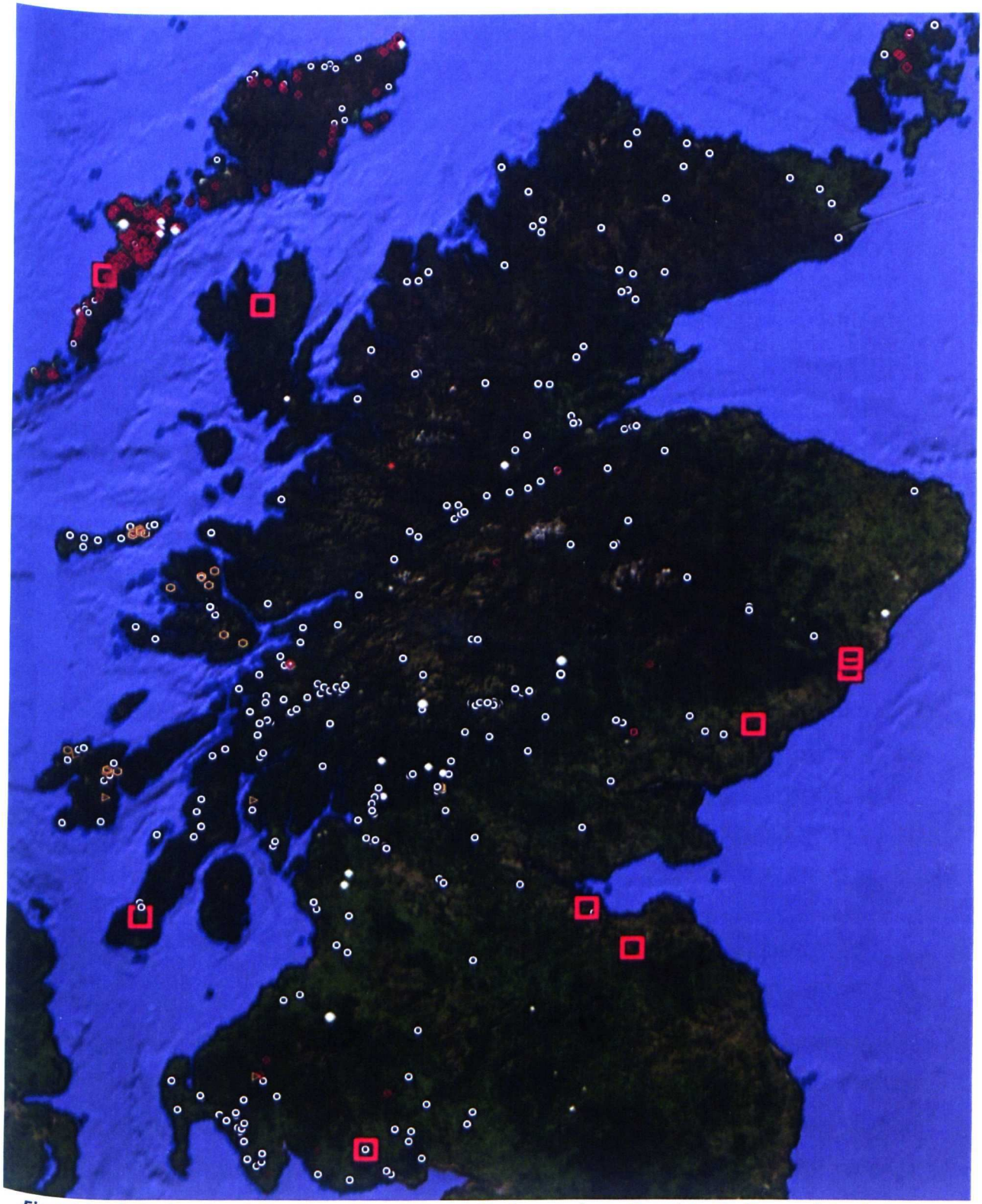


Figure 3.18 *Findspots of 'Northern Step I' Ewart Park swords as found in Carlingwark Loch (red squares). None of the estimated 15 in existence were discovered further than 12km from the sea. The average distance was 5.4km to the sea or 1.57km from a navigable river leading to open ocean.*

Location	Distance To Sea (km)	Dist to Sea access (km)	In Loch/Bog
Lyndale, Skye	0.7	0.7	*
Moss of Cowie	2.5	2.5	*
7,8 Grosvenor Hse	3.5	3.5	
Killeonan	4.2	0.32	*
Balnagrub	4.5	4.5	*
Carlingwark	9.6	1.9	*
Keith Marischal Hse	11.8	0.42	
Brechin	11.9	0.2	*
Iochdar	0.1	0.1	*
AVG	5.42	1.57	

Figure 3.19 *Distance from sea or sea access for all Ewart Type Northern Step 1 swords including loch or bog location. Only two were not found in watery locations.*

witnessed the active use of island dwellings and quickly appreciated the defensive advantages of such sites. In light of the quantity of small islands in the south west that would serve as ready-made retreats, forward groups could have quickly utilised these sites as secure rest stops without having to construct camps that might only be used for a single night. Conversely, the islands may have been investigated out of curiosity whereby Roman goods changed hands. These interpretations could help explain the dwindling quantity of later Roman material, and also interpret the subsequent nature of finds such as patera, a staple of the Roman soldier's field kit. While this may seem counter-intuitive to the typical image of a massive legion marching a swath through the countryside, it remains a little discussed possibility in the overall suite of explanations involving Roman material on crannogs.

3.8.5 The nature of Early Historic island dwellings in the south west

Whatever the reasons for an apparent hiatus following the 3rd century may be, the evidence for Early Historic use is certainly visible in phases of reconstruction seen at Buiston, Milton Loch III and Barean. The artefactual assemblages from Dowalton I are the source of some debate, with the iron implements either being ascribed to the Romano-British period or later. The type 'G' brooch, however, is a good indicator of continued re-use here; radiocarbon dating at Dowalton I would likely indicate later prehistoric origins given the nature of the surrounding sites but perhaps also illuminate later phases of repair which would lend more weight to theories on Early Historic activity. What can be associated to the Early Historic Period, however, is a phase of crannog re-use broadly corresponding either with the arrival of

Rheged from the south or later ventures from the Bernecian Angles visible through the radiocarbon dates from all three sites. The last evidence of activity at Barean Loch can tentatively be placed sometime around the leading edge of Scandinavian raids into the Irish Sea region on the cusp of the 8th/9th centuries.

3.8.6 *Discussion of Medieval and later island dwellings in the south west*

As portrayed above, the hiatus in crannog use appearing around 800AD lasts until perhaps the end of the 11th century when a building phase at Lochrutton is known to have occurred. It is notable that the *–byr* placenames, associated with Danish settlement stemming from Cumbria, form a noticeable boundary with the mid-Medieval use of at least three island dwellings along this border in Eastern Dumfries and Galloway: Lochrutton, Loch Arthur (Lotus Loch) and Rough Island (Loch Urr). The lack of use during periods of Scandinavian influence can partially be attributed to changing centres of power which placed different demands on the indigenous populace as the 1098AD account from the *Chronicles of Man* indicated. Conversely, in light of the number of crannogs that have not been subject to excavation or radiocarbon assay, it would again be surprising if no occupation took place for three hundred years, only to be revived in several different areas at approximately the same time. Conversely, it is always important when dating phases of re-use to be aware that chance deposition is an ever present factor as evidenced by modern debris from fisherman from 'casual visits' which can skew interpretations. Two 17th century coins found at Black Loch are noted here yet were not included in the above examination due to a lack of additional information regarding their circumstances. However, when considering the stronger evidence for structural remains, whatever the degree of disrepair, in combination with oral traditions, here Loch Maberry (NX27NE1) or Fir Island (NX76SE9), a more compelling case is formed when attempting to place these sites in their chronological context.

As with previous studies of terrestrial sites and artificial islands in the south-west, there is still a tremendous reliance on antiquarian investigations of vastly differing standards despite the considerable amount of recent work that has occurred. The high concentration of crannogs in the south west is generally seen as a by-product of these early investigations from drainage operations, yet the density recorded in south west Scotland stands as a valid testament to the widespread cultural adoption of island dwellings in prehistory, notably in areas such as

Galloway, which also contains examples (albeit limited) of Atlantic roundhouses. The re-use of island dwellings is attested to in both the radiocarbon data and the material record, much in the same way that it appears in following chapters on Argyll and the Western Isles (below). Despite the existing legacy of research in the south west, an insufficient amount of excavation needs to be reconciled in order to gain an increased understanding of the role of island dwellings in the historic landscape of the south west.

3.8.7 Looking forward in the south west

The chronology of island dwelling construction and use has received much needed clarification in the past two decades, especially in regards to the south west, yet periods of reoccupation still remain uncertain, especially prior to the 1st century BC and during the 'Dark Age' between the Roman Iron Age and the Early Historic Period. Future work needs to address these issues by not only re-assessing past excavation reports, but by also taking into consideration the taphonomic processes which have only recently been brought to light in terms of the complexity of island dwelling stratigraphy (Cavers 2007). Additionally, a landscape perspective which considers the relationship of island dwellings to terrestrial sites is another critical aspect which has only recently begun to take shape. This perspective is especially important in light of the limited diagnostic potential of the material record throughout much of the first millennium BC. In this regard, a problematic element is the wide calibration curve which reflects the circumstances encountered at Buiston when trying to reconcile radiocarbon determinations with dendrochronological data. As methodological and analytical methods continue to improve existing narratives on interpretation, it is hoped the understanding of the motivations involved with the 'cultural' choices made by inhabitants of Scotland to live on the water will follow suit. The following chapter moves northwards to Argyll and examines the evidence for islet use and reuse in Highland Scotland, while examining evidence for their relationship to Irish sites in an Atlantic context.

Chapter 4

Island Dwellings from Argyll and Bute to the Moray Firth: Maritime and waterway influences from the Irish Sea Zone

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Chapter aims

This chapter examines how two distinct geographical elements, one maritime and one highland, have shaped the distribution and use of island dwellings from Argyll to the Moray Firth. Chronologically, the use of islets from the later prehistoric through the Post-Medieval Period throughout this region follows a similar trajectory as other areas of mainland Scotland. The physical location of Argyll is ideally poised to provide a centralised perspective to the island dwelling tradition in Scotland. In a similar manner as the south west, Argyll can be viewed as a crossroads of maritime cultures given its proximity to the Western Isles and Irish Sea (fig. 4.1). In this analysis, interior waterways in Argyll (i.e. the Great Glen) are shown to provide an important year-round route from the Irish Sea Zone and southern Hebrides to the east coast and ultimately Caithness and the Northern Isles (fig. 4.2). Previous research has presented a picture of a scattered, random distribution of island dwellings across the interior of Scotland. In reality, islet distributions follow a considerably more discrete pattern which places the majority along waterways or within large Highland lochs such as Loch Awe or Loch Tay. In the deeper Highland lochs, such as Loch Ness, where much of the shoreline deepens too rapidly for the construction of islets, they are instead found in shallower lochs overlooking the Great Glen.

Carrying a maritime theme into the Early Historic Period, particular attention below is given to the influence of Dál Riata, the Irish kingdom believed to have controlled much of Argyll from the 6th to the 9th century until the Norse incursions. A visible level of cultural continuity between Ireland and Western Scotland is again apparent in the unique expression of constructing crannogs as indicated in the previous chapter. This phenomenon of islet occupation in both areas can be viewed as a reliable weathervane.

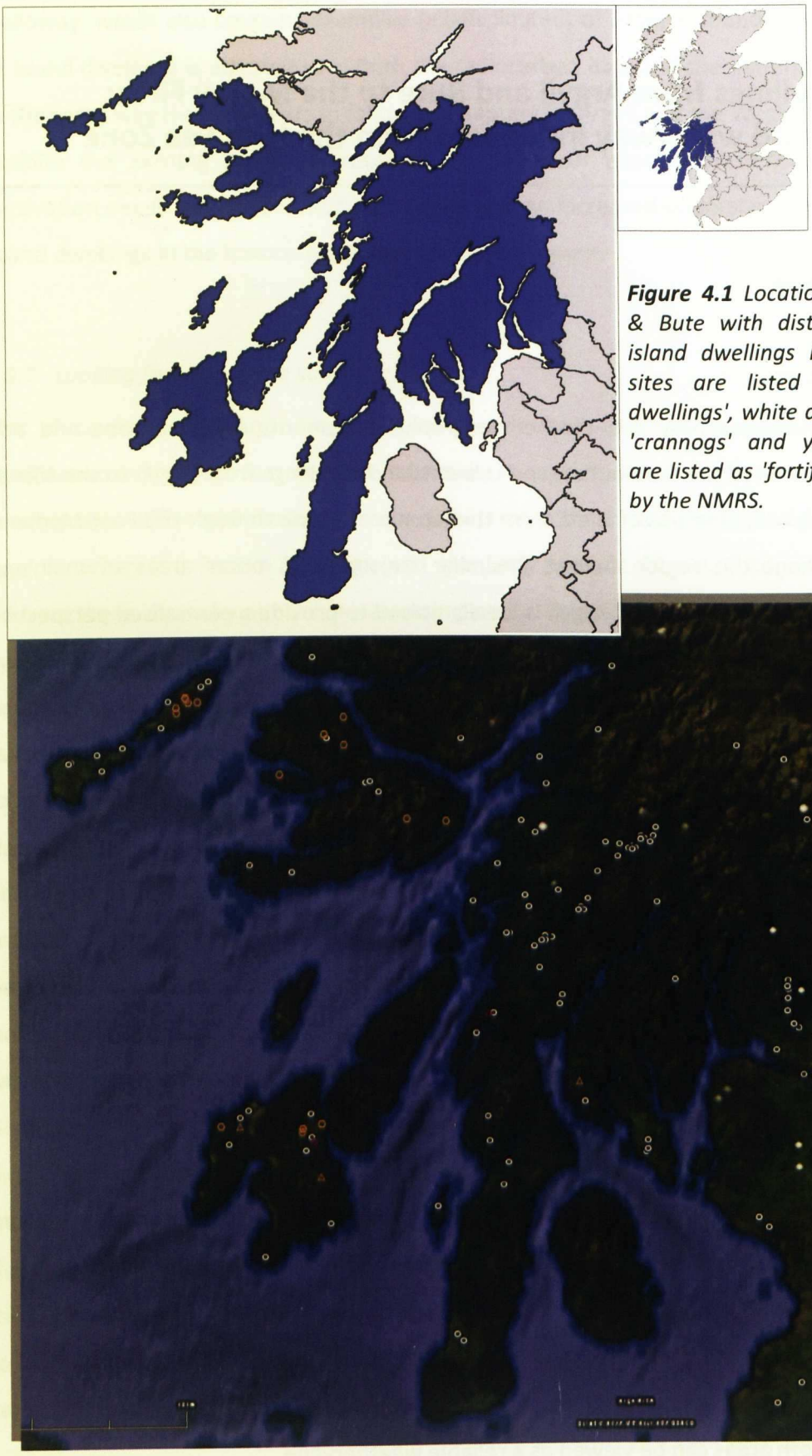


Figure 4.1 *Location of Argyll & Bute with distribution of island dwellings below. Red sites are listed as 'island dwellings', white are listed as 'crannogs' and yellow sites are listed as 'fortified islands' by the NMRS.*

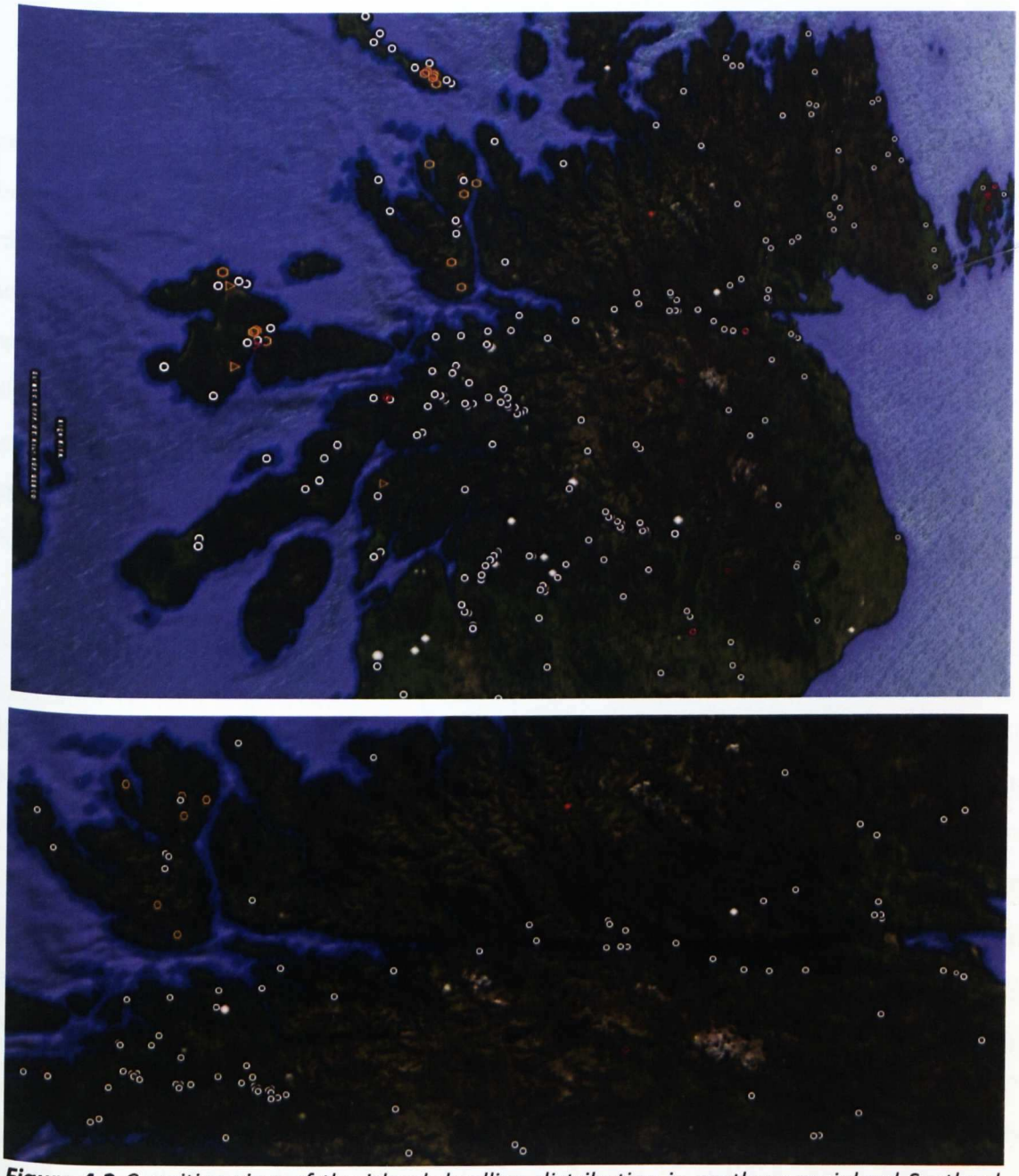


Figure 4.2 *Cognitive view of the island dwelling distribution in northern mainland Scotland and the Inner Hebrides (above) and close-up of distribution along the Great Glen (below). In contrast to existing maps which typically indicate a general or random distribution (Cavers 2006), the precise mapping of sites allows a much clearer understanding of their placement throughout Scotland while highlighting patterns of spatial location along both inland water routes and the sea.*

of cultural connectivity across the Irish Sea. Island dwellings are well-poised to corroborate elements of contact in contrast to both the material assemblages and terrestrial settlement records which remain less convincing despite having fundamental similarities. In Ireland, settlement forms in later prehistory are dominated by ringforts and cashels which, although

circular drystone constructions, contrast with the unique broch architecture of Atlantic Scotland.

As highlighted in Chapter 2 (p. 57), debate over the onset of of crannog use in Ireland poses some problems when contrasted with a rapidly growing corpus of Scottish radiocarbon and dendrochronology dates. While a degree of cultural continuity with Ireland is visible within the archaeological record of Atlantic Scotland, the most lucid expression of this contact is found in Argyll through the numerous historical references, settlement forms and to a lesser degree, the material culture during the first millennium AD. This expression is most visible within the island dwelling tradition which has a discreet distribution in both areas. Therefore, a discussion of crannogs in Argyll needs to consider activity across the Irish Sea as well, and begins with a brief background to contemporary Irish paradigms.

4.1.2 The development of Irish Crannog studies

Historically, crannog studies in Ireland have followed a similar pattern to Scottish work with early initial interest spurred by the discovery of lacustrine sites in Switzerland in 1853-54. However, Irish examples were noted before the presence of Continental lake-villages was established. One of the earliest references dates to 1810 when Lough Nahinch in Co. Tipperary was drained revealing a crannog some 60 feet across resembling the 'top of a tub' due to the stave-like nature of the palisade (Wood-Martin 1886: 212-3; O'Sullivan 1998: 8). It was not until 1839 that the now well-known site at Lagore, Co. Meath was exposed during drainage and was subsequently investigated by William Wilde and George Petrie. However, a full publication of the information never materialised from this work; Lagore was later excavated in greater detail by Hencken's Harvard Expedition in the 1930s (Hencken 1937). William Wilde did produce a *Catalogue of Antiquities*, the first real attempt at assessing the Irish evidence, although from a primarily artefact-based perspective (1857). Wakeman and Wood-Martin followed in the latter half of the nineteenth century with the former publishing several surveys and reports between 1861 and 1891.

After a lapse which saw the first World War and internal strife, it was not until the Harvard Archaeological Expedition of 1932 that island dwelling archaeology in Ireland regained momentum. Led by H.O. Hencken, three crannogs were investigated: Ballinderry no. 1, Co.

Westmeath, Ballinderry no. 2, Co. Offaly[1] and Lagore, Co. Meath (Hencken 1936, 1942 & 1950). Several decades later, Lough Gara was part of a drainage programme in the early 1950s, revealing a prolific amount of archaeological material and not surprisingly, numerous crannogs. By the 1980s, crannog studies played an increasingly influential role in Irish settlement studies. Archaeologists were not the only interested parties however, as sport divers with metal detectors were able to legally salvage submerged sites until 1987 when legislation was introduced to halt this activity (O'Sullivan 1998: 29-30). The 1980s also witnessed the first systematic survey of Irish lacustrine sites with the Crannog Archaeological Project which performed underwater survey, and the Archaeological Survey of Ireland which utilised aerial photography. From 1857 to 1998, the number of confirmed or suspected island dwellings increased from 46 to approximately 1200 between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (O'Sullivan 1998: 13, 32; National Monuments Service 2009; NIEA 2009).

Despite Ireland having over twice the amount of known island dwellings as Scotland, modern excavation remains limited overall (O'Sullivan & Sands 2005: 303), and is on a similar par with Scotland. It is clear that Ireland experienced a marked floruit of crannog (re)construction from the sixth century AD onwards to an unparalleled degree in Scotland despite a similar chronological horizon, albeit on a diminished scale. Cavers remarks: 'The close similarities in construction patterns for Northern Irish and South Western Scottish crannogs in the period immediately after the historic incursion of the Dál Riata may well prove to be significant' (2006: 64). I would further suggest that the reuse of later prehistoric crannogs, along with new construction in both Ireland and Scotland during the Early Historic Period is a significant indicator of cultural continuity between the Irish Sea Zone and Atlantic Scotland. While a common occurrence throughout northerly areas of the Irish Sea Zone and beyond, the absence of island dwellings in southerly areas of Britain (not Ireland) marks a clear transition in settlement preferences which more closely reflects Continental forms. However, it is the location itself (i.e. small islets versus large hilltop enclosures, for example), not the physical forms themselves (i.e. roundhouses) that provide the greatest contrast in what appear to be rather striking cultural differences. While a limited number of large hillforts do exist in south east Scotland (where crannogs are in fact non-existent) such as Traprain Law and Chesters Hillfort, their sharply limited distribution contrasted by the presence of unique forms of

[1] Ballinderry Lough straddles County Offaly and County Westmeath in the Republic of Ireland. The two crannogs are in the same lough but different counties, hence the numeric designations. 'Ballinderry' itself is also not to be confused with two parishes in Northern Ireland of the same name.

Atlantic architecture and islet occupation northwards denotes fundamental differences in the way social dynamics were structured along this 'cultural faultline'. These differences are apparent even in southern British areas of the Irish Sea Zone, where crannogs would not seem out of place yet are conspicuously absent. The prime exception to this, introduced in Chapter One, is the single crannog found in Wales at Llangorse Lake. Yet it is important to bear in mind that this is a rather 'late' Early Historic period construct which has been interpreted as an Irish import by the excavators as:

> *...a unique example of an Irish monument type constructed in Wales; historical sources suggest it was constructed in the late 9th century by the king of Brycheiniog and destroyed in 916 AD by a Mercian army'* (Redknap & Lane 1999: 377).

While it would be easy to see this site as the proverbial 'thorn in the side' of crannog distribution studies, the presence of Llangorse in the Welsh countryside is, in fact, a stark reminder of agency in action, the realisation that the *concept itself* of buildings islands is easily portable across the sea and could have taken place anywhere in Britain there was a small body of water. The act of building and living on islets would have been witnessed by countless people over the millennia who lived outside their distribution area, yet they manage to retain a discreet distribution. I think this speaks for itself in that the concept was one that was met with enthusiasm in Atlantic Scotland, while being all but ignored in the south.

Despite a limited distribution for this peculiar settlement form, virtually no research has been performed to synthesise Scottish and Irish crannog studies with precious few exceptions (*cf* Cavers 2010). This is perhaps a reflection of the emerging modern research frameworks in the relevant areas which seek to understand indigenous sites before tackling a comprehensive overview. Modern political factors in heritage management may also complicate a synthesis between Irish and Scottish sites. Island dwellings are located within the jurisdiction of three separate governmental bodies tasked to perform monitoring or survey: The National Monuments Service in the Republic of Ireland, The Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Scotland. Finally, conflicting chronological terminologies can also serve to complicate a synthesis of the material. There are fundamental differences in research which have traditionally seen Irish sites studies fall more under the guise of Early Christian period

scholarship, while the Scottish emphasis has been on later prehistoric use. This directly limits the usefulness of the data to those who do not take a long term approach to island dwellings and focus upon a particular period instead. Of particular interest for future research is why islet occupation apparently saw periods of intense use at different times between Ireland and Scotland. If so, is it merely a by-product of different research agendas or is it a true reflection of the actual use-patterns? The current understanding of a Late Bronze Age and Early Christian crannog floruit in Ireland, contrasting with an Iron Age floruit in Scotland, can only be refined or at least more clearly interpreted, after sufficient absolute dating or excavation is established.

4.1.3 Irish Iron Age material culture: where is it?

Evidence of Irish Iron Age material culture is generally perceived as 'nebulous' (O'Kelly 1989: 245) or even 'enigmatic' (O'Sullivan 1998:96; Raftery 1994) while the long-held notion of any invasion into Ireland by a Celtic people is no longer seriously considered (*cf* Collis 2003). There is certainly a La Tène influence witnessed in the material record through depositional metalwork finds from Lisnacrogher, Ballinderry, Dun Ailinne and Lough Gur. Only a handful of hillforts exhibit evidence of Iron Age occupation in Ireland, and this tends to be rooted in Late Bronze Age activity such as at Mooghaun, Co. Clare (Grogan 1996: 27). Paleo-environmental evidence indicates a climatic downturn around the 9th century BC (*see* section 4.2.2), and a (much) later lapse in the agricultural pollen record from roughly the 1st century BC to the mid-3rd century AD suggests a possible accumulative result of this phase as a sudden decline in population due to famine or disease (Magny 1982: 41). Additionally, studies of Irish prehistory, when dealing with an easily decomposable material culture, (i.e. wooden containers, timbers and peat structures), tend to rely heavily on wetland archaeology when tallying the artefactual evidence. Yet this evidence is still relatively sparse for a later prehistoric horizon in comparison to the Scottish record. In the most comprehensive publication on Irish island dwellings to date, O'Sullivan's examination of the evidence is six pages in length (1998:96-101), although it is clear recent evidence has elaborated upon the Irish Iron Age with several new excavations (O'Sullivan & Sands 2005; O'Sullivan & Sands 2007) and reinterpretation of existing excavations such as Rathtinaun, Co. Sligo. There are exceptional cases of Irish Iron Age material culture which survive, typically derived from antiquarian excavation or discoveries made whilst peat-cutting. Lisnacrogher, in Co. Antrim,

is currently the largest discovery of Iron Age metalwork in Ireland, encompassing a large assemblage of weapons, tools, and ornaments (Raftery 1983: 287). The hoard was found in close proximity to a suspected crannog which was also unearthed during peat cutting over the course of the late 19th century. No relationship between the crannog, investigated by William Wakeman and later Robert Munro, and the metal hoard was conclusively established at the time as the badly damaged (and looted) crannog produced 'souterrain ware' which was interpreted as indicating Early Historic occupation (Munro 1890: 379; Wakeman 1890: 543; O'Sullivan 1998: 98-99). The relationship of the hoard to the possible crannog remained in considerable doubt until recently. Beyond the location of the hoard itself, Barry Raftery also indicated that no solid evidence existed for the wooden timbers actually being from a crannog. Indeed, Raftery seemed more inclined to believe that the wooden structure was related to a pier from which devotional objects were cast into the bog, similar to sites found at La Tène (Raftery 1994: 184). Due to the peat cutting and frantic excavation of the site, little or no contextual information was obtained although it must be said that the description of the mortised timbers and wattle strongly pointed toward a island dwelling, while ten years after the initial discovery, objects were still being recovered (O'Sullivan 1998: 98-99; Raftery 1994: 184).

However, recent analysis by Fredengren (2008) has revealed a newspaper article published in the *Ballymena Observer* (1880), three years before Wakeman's visits, which details an outing by a local naturalist group who dug the site in a moment of heady enthusiasm. The artefacts noted included stone tools, polished quartz, hazelnuts, pottery, and debitage. In addition, a bronze sword sheath was discovered shortly before the dig by a peat-cutter who remarked that similar objects had been coming up at the site for an undisclosed time. This material was found immediately *over* the site, not around or near the margins, and after considering the nature of the circular structure related in the article, ringed with pointed piles and topped with wattle, clay and stones, there is little doubt in my mind that a crannog existed at Lisnacrogher, a view shared by Fredengren (2008:31). Given the systematic pilfering of the site over the years preceding Munro's visit, it is little wonder that the remains of the crannog were all but erased upon his arrival.

4.1.4 Considerations of later prehistoric settlement forms in Ireland and Scotland

While the archaeological evidence for the Irish Iron Age can be elusive, settlement forms survive as indicators of later prehistoric activity in the landscape. While settlement types can be seen to vary markedly between Ireland and Western Scotland in later prehistory, most notably complex Atlantic roundhouses, broad parallels in size, materials, location and layout exist. Almost 200 circular sites broadly classed as 'duns' by the RCAHMS from the first millennium BC in Argyll can be considered as Atlantic Roundhouses while the 'dun enclosures' in Atlantic Scotland are perhaps a closer typological equivalent to the Irish raths and cashels (Gilmour 1994; Henderson 2000: 123). The group of 'Complex Atlantic Roundhouses', including brochs or 'complex towers' and wheelhouses, are exclusive to Scotland. Nevertheless, parallels with similar levels of technical complexity are evident in Atlantic Ireland in the larger stone forts, most notably Dun Aonghasa. In western Scotland, hilltop duns begin to appear in later prehistory yet typically date from the Early Historic Period onwards, and are considered widespread in Argyll during the mid-first millennium AD (Crone & Campbell 2005: 7).

Overall, Ireland is well known for its massive proliferation of some 45,000-50,000 raths, or earthen ringforts which can be defined as circular homesteads averaging about 20 to 50m in diameter with a bank and ditch enclosure (Stout *in* O'Sullivan 1998: 102; Heywood 2001: 96) while the 'cashel' or *caiséal*, Goidelic (from *castellum*, Latin) is the stone equivalent of an Irish rath. These site-types are typically believed to date to the Early Historic period; however this view is changing in a similar manner to lake-settlement archaeology in light of growing evidence (Raftery 1994: 38; Limbert 1996: 243; Henderson 2000:127). As the raths and cashels have been traditionally ascribed to the first millennium AD based upon artefactual assemblages, this has in essence created a hypothetical scenario whereby tens of thousands of homesteads appear out of a relatively barren Iron Age landscape, rather an unlikely scenario. In contrast, enclosed and unenclosed hut circles in Scotland provide bountiful evidence for a ubiquitous form of dwelling throughout later prehistory; the inability to distinguish dated Bronze Age hut circles from Early Historic examples based upon visual inspection demonstrates the continuity of the form; it would be surprising if Irish counterparts did not exhibit a similar chronological currency as well.

While later prehistoric terrestrial settlement between Ireland and Scotland lacks a specific shared architectural form, the crannog occupies a discreet niche in the landscape of both areas. According to Cavers, 'Crannogs offer the closest known parallels to Irish settlement forms in Scotland but this link has never been fully investigated.' (2010: 241). However, when using restrictive definitions, Crone states that the crannog 'appeared in Scotland early in the first millennium BC and filtered through to Ireland sometime in the late sixth century AD' (Crone 1993: 245). While absolute dating has begun to reveal the actual trajectory of use, there are nevertheless noticeable pulses in island dwelling chronologies between Scotland and Ireland which remain unexplained. These 'peaks and valleys' in island dwelling occupation in limited areas of Britain and Ireland suggests an interconnectivity through perhaps large scale socio-political events. This is opposed to crannog construction or a particular form of islet settlement occurring as isolated trends within an area that is in reality one discreet, contiguous zone. The following chapter sections detail this island dwelling use in Argyll, while illustrating that distributions on or near major waterways and maritime zones, not construction techniques, offer a more productive means of analysis into the motives behind occupation.

4.2 Across the Irish Sea: Argyll

4.2.1 Geography and Landscape in Argyll

Argyll is essentially a south western highland region consisting of steep glacial valleys set in a rugged, quasi-mountainous landscape with the highest point, Ben Cruachan (1126m) overlooking the northern end of Loch Awe. Argyll maintains a decidedly maritime character with the offshore portion comprising the southern Inner Hebridean archipelago of Islay, Jura, Mull, Coll and Tiree and 47 smaller outliers. These islands help to create a barrier between the North Atlantic and mainland coastline which contains numerous fjords reaching far inland. This archipelago effectively forms a chain of 'stepping stones' bordered to the north by Skye, and northwest by the Western Isles. The island of Arran and the Mull of Kintyre, a long narrow peninsula, forms the southern portion of maritime Argyll; Ireland lies some 20km to the south and is visible on the horizon under fair conditions. Currently Argyll and Bute, at some 700,000 hectares, remains largely undeveloped in nature with 96% of land classed as 'remote rural' providing a low population density of over 7.5 hectares per person

while the largest settlement is fewer than 15,000 inhabitants (Argyll & Bute Council 2008). Much of this is due to the aforementioned ruggedness and upland character of Argyll which constrains settlement to lower areas which are also sheltered from the North Atlantic weather systems. Agriculturally, land use is also restricted to the lower, more protected glens reducing the actual area for viable settlement in Argyll substantially. Whilst comprising almost three-quarters of a million hectares, recent surveys state only 26,000ha of land in Argyll and Bute are classed as crofter's holdings, while 56,000ha are classed as 'rough grazing' despite the predominately undeveloped nature of the landscape (HECLA 2002: 18).

4.2.2 Climate change in Scotland during the later Holocene

While much has been written about the changing nature of the Scottish climate during the Holocene (Anderson 1998; Chambers *et al.* 1997; Oliver *et al.* 1997; Magny 1982), what specifically concerns this chapter is the period from the Late Bronze Age to the mid-Iron Age; prevailing environmental models currently hold that two main phases extend over this period: the Sub-Boreal until approximately 800BC, and the Sub-Atlantic extending to the present. The sub-Atlantic phase was instigated by a shift in the Polar Front, which ebbs and flows from the Arctic region in extended cycles lasting several centuries or more (Whittington *et al* 2003: 13). The Sub-Boreal appears to have had summers which were roughly 2 degrees Celsius warmer while winters were more severe than the sub-Atlantic, yet overall it was drier with reduced precipitation. This currently wetter, milder sub-Atlantic phase brought with it an increased spread of blanket peats which served to further reduce the amount of arable land in a region already considered marginal (Magny 1982: 41).

Conceivably, the marginalisation of uplands would have gradually condensed previously dispersed populations into areas where agriculture remained viable, placing increased pressure on natural resources which led to increased competition for resources. This would not have been an abrupt shift, rather one taking place over many decades or centuries. However, it should be stressed that much debate still exists as to the intensity and subsequent interpretation of such changes (Smith 1985: 341; Fossitt 1996:172). In contrast to synchronic events discussed in the previous chapter, citing environmental interpretations to help explain the onset of elaborate (*read defensive*) domestic architecture in later prehistory is an attractive proposition yet deserves caution. In the archaeological record, this paradigm

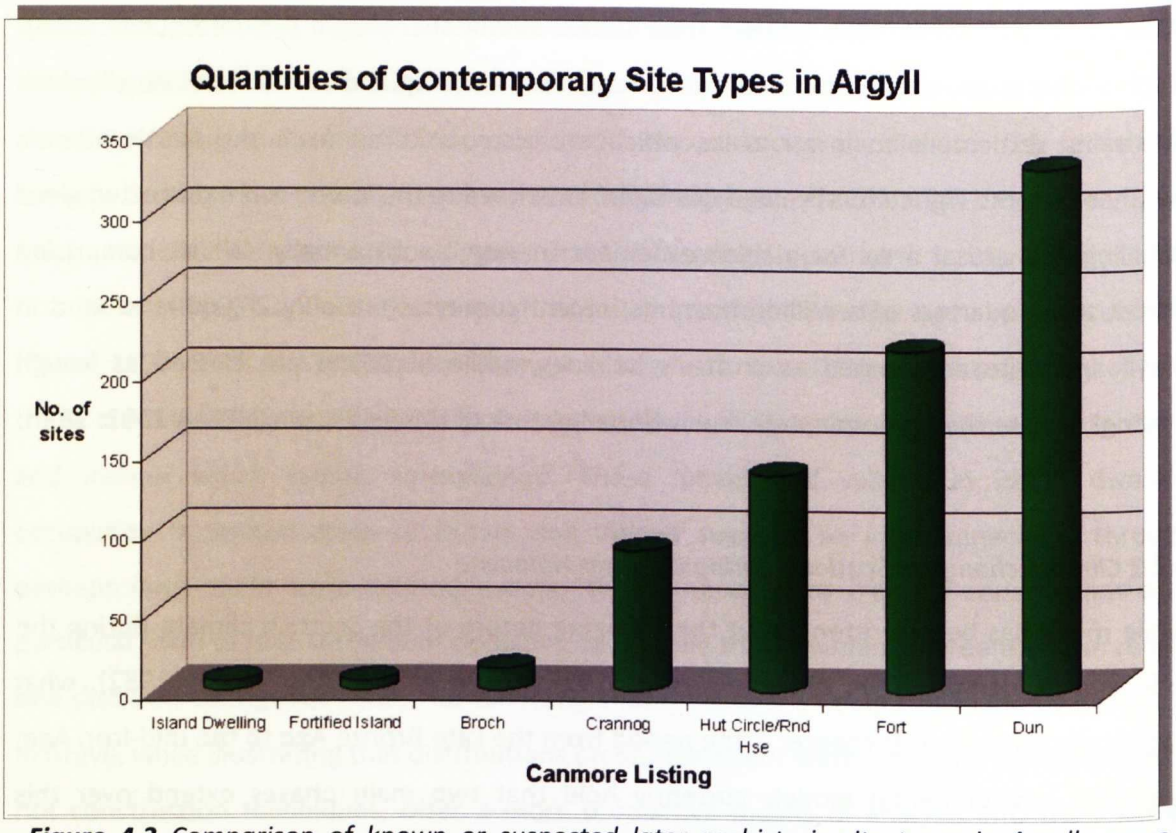


Figure 4.3 *Comparison of known or suspected later prehistoric site types in Argyll versus crannogs and 'variants' such as fortified islands and island dwellings.*

is typified by the emergence of sophisticated domestic architecture (i.e. brochs) contrasted by a decline in communal funerary sites such as chambered tombs. A generalised climatic event, such as the onset of the Sub-Atlantic, should not be seen as the driving force behind widespread changes in later prehistoric societies by causing aggressive competition for dwindling land resources as habitable areas were marginalised. Currently, without an increase in chronological resolution to compare environmental factors in relation to the onset of crannog construction, it remains tenuous to rely on climate change as the main instigator for the shift to the lochs. Yet as AMS determinations and dendrochronology become increasingly refined, I feel the palynological evidence will support a close link between the two. Consequently, as the initial wave of large-scale crannog construction along with the emergence of Atlantic architecture (c.800-700BC) appears to closely follow the arrival of the Sub-Atlantic phase, this only bolsters the argument for a climatic downturn as an (in)direct influence upon island dwelling construction in the Early Iron Age.

4.2.3 *Island Dwellings in Argyll*

Argyll and Bute contains 102 occupied islets either listed as 'crannogs', 'island dwellings' or 'fortified islands' based upon current RCAHMS records placing them well below totals for terrestrial sites (fig. 4.3). The chronological evidence in Argyll (fig. 4.4) ranges from Late Bronze Age activity at Meldalloch Island, a natural island with evidence for palisaded roundhouses, to Loch Leathan which has indicated activity during the Late Bronze/Iron Age transition with phases of later reuse after the 13th or 14th centuries (Cavers 2003: 26). Under current estimates, Argyll contains the highest density of island dwellings on the mainland at just under one site per 80km^2. This includes the Inner Hebrides where densities reach one island dwelling per 41km^2 on Islay[2]. Distributions on mainland Argyll tend to be either in coastal areas, such as along the Clyde or in mid-Argyll, or at intervals, rather than discreet clusters, throughout the larger inland bodies of water such as Loch Lomond or Loch Awe. This interior preference for the larger highland lochs continues eastwards into Perthshire with Loch Tay.

There exist a handful of isolated examples in smaller lochs outside of the general distribution, such as Eilean an Stalcair (NN24SE1) in Loch Tualla, mentioned in Medieval Charters (Stuart 1868:172). However, many of the smaller, more remote lochs have seen little archaeological interest for survey which has perhaps created a bias in the overall distribution. While Cavers (2006:37) points out the highest concentrations of crannogs are to be found in marginal regions (i.e. the Highlands and Islands), this observation loses momentum when compared to the substantial density found in the south west, a landscape of high agricultural quality. While the southern uplands are all but void of this settlement type, the south-east has displayed a preference for southerly and more Continental settlement forms anyway (Hale 2005: 275). This creates a model which includes both quality agricultural and marginal land, while specific reports of 'high altitude' sites, such as the suspected Corie an Lochan at 660m OD, are often revealed to simply be natural features breaking the loch surface (Lenfert 2011). Indeed, general models indicate island dwelling distributions are determined by the density of suitable lochs themselves, a logical conclusion (*cf* Morrison 1985, Fredengren 2002, Dixon 2004). Yet upon closer examination, the majority of lochs capable of supporting crannog construction lie unoccupied, not only in Argyll but throughout much of Scotland. This indicates a selective rationale behind site location rather than a wholesale adoption of islet

[2]Please refer to Chapter 6, figure 6.1 for a comparison of island dwelling densities throughout Scotland.

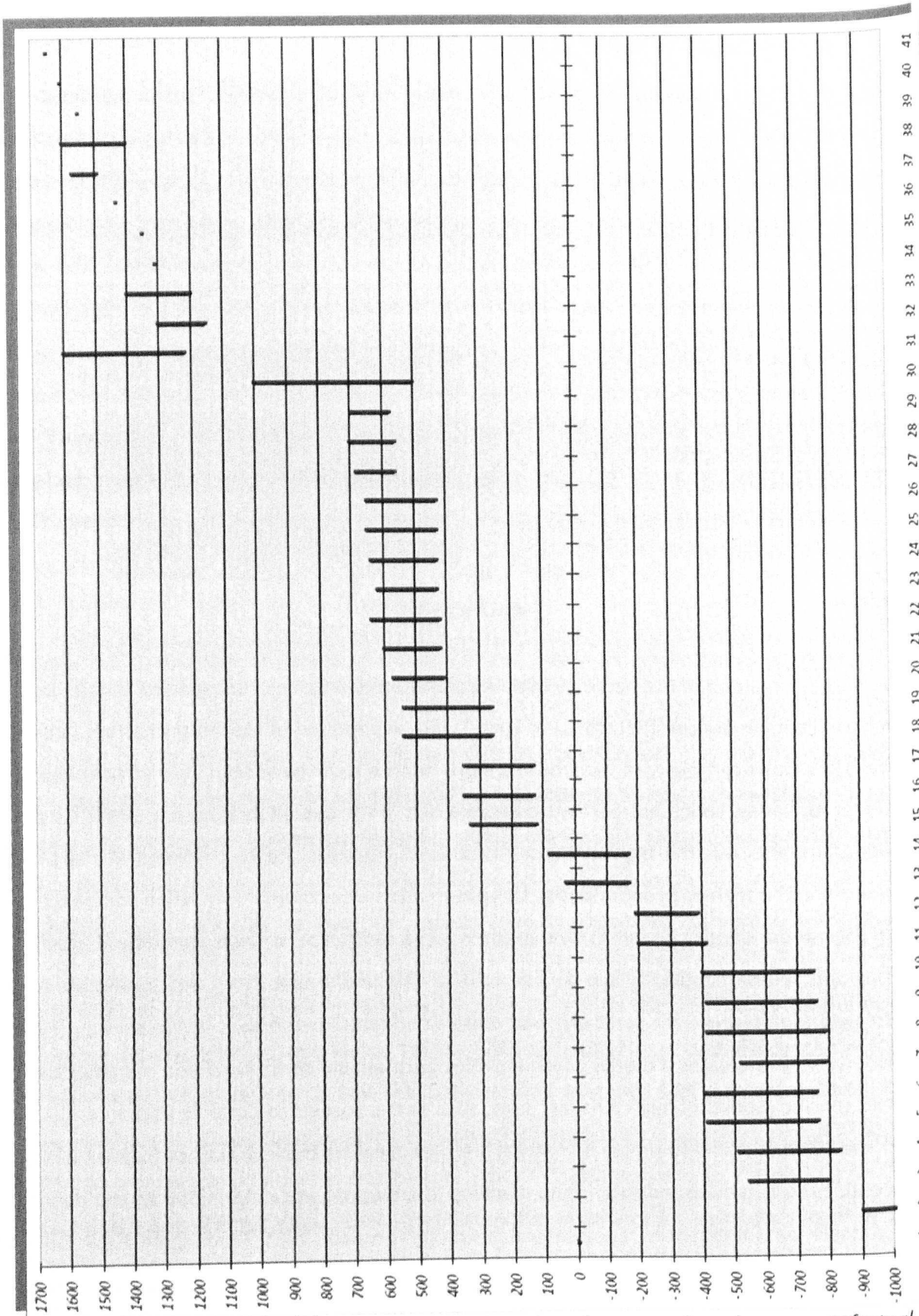


Figure 4.4a *Chronological plots for Argyll & Bute based upon radiocarbon or artefactual evidence.*

	Site	Context	Lab Number	LowerBC/AD	UpperBC/AD	#NAME?	Mean BP	Deviation	Location	area	type evidence
2	Melldalloch Island	Heart of beam	GU_8188	-1014	-903		2968	?	Kilfinan	Argyll&Bute	
3	Melldalloch Island	Above central hole	AA_33138	-795	-542		2669	?	Kilfinan	Argyll&Bute	
4	Loch Avich	Structural Pile	GU-11920	-830	-510		2650	50	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
5	Melldalloch Island	Adjacent to paving	AA_33137	-763	-411		2587	?	Kilfinan	Argyll&Bute	
6	Melldalloch Island	Central hole	AA_33136	-759	-403		2581	?	Kilfinan	Argyll&Bute	
7	Ederline	205 Oak Pile	SUERC-20205	-790	-520		2510	30	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
8	Loch Leathan	pile	GU-11921	-790	-410		2480	50	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
9	Ederline	203 Hazel	SUERC-20206	-760	-410		2455	30	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
10	Ederline	205 Oak Horizontal	SUERC-20208	-750	-400		2450	30	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
11	Ederline	105 Ash	SUERC-11464	-410	-200		2285	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
12	Ederline	Structural pile	GU-2415	-390	-190		2220	45	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
13	Ederline	105 Alder	SUERC-11463	-170	30		2055	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
14	Dubh Loch	Horizontal beam	GU-11924	-170	80		2030	50	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
15	Loch Glashan	Timber 2	GU-11525	120	330		1815	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
16	Loch Glashan	Alnus Trough	GU-11522	130	350		1790	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
17	Loch Glashan	Peg	GU-11523	130	350		1780	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
18	Loch Glashan	Timber 1	GU-11524	260	540		1650	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
19	Loch Glashan	Fraxinus excelsior	GU-11860	260	540		1650	40	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
20	Ederline	103 Bone	SUERC-11465	410	570		1575	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
21	Ederline	103 Bone	SUERC-11469	420	600		1535	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
22	Loch Glashan	E-ware residue	GU-11394	420	640		1530	50	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
23	Ederline	107 Charcoal	SUERC-20207	430	620		1515	30	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
24	Ederline	103 Alder	SUERC-11462	430	640		1505	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
25	Loch Glashan	E-ware residue	GU-11395	430	650		1500	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
26	Loch Seil	pile	GU-11922	430	650		1500	50	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
27	Loch Glashan	E-ware residue	GU-11396	560	680		1415	35	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
28	Loch Glashan	E-ware residue	GU-11397	560	700		1400	40	Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	
29	Ederline			575	699		1375		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	artefactual
30	Loch Glashan			500	1000		1260		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	artefactual
31	Elan-Rossdhu			1220	1602		790		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
32	Loch Eck	scrap wood	GU-11923	1150	1300		780	50	Highland	Highland	
33	Loch Leathan			1200	1400		710		Kilmichael Glassary	Argyll&Bute	artefactual
34	Loch Eck			1310	1310		700		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
35	Rubha Na Moine			1350	1350		660		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
36	Eilean An Stalcair			1432	1432		578		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
37	Eilean Mhic Iain			1490	1570		520		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
38	Lochan Dughaill			1400	1600		510		Kilcalmonell	Argyll&Bute	artefactual
39	Loch Ballygrant			1549	1549		461		Killarow & Kilmeny	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
40	Loch A' Phearsain			1605	1605		405		Argyll&Bute	Argyll&Bute	hist ref
41	Loch Leathan			1647	1647		363		Kilmichael Glassary	Argyll&Bute	hist ref

Figure 4.4b *Chronological data for Argyll & Bute.*

forms wherever the landscape was suitable. Given that there are over 30,000 lochs in Scotland, the appearance of 347 artificially constructed islets is in reality a very restricted event which occurs in less than 0.97% of all Scottish lochs. If one considers all 571 island dwellings, artificial or otherwise, then island dwellings still only appear in less than 1.5% of lochs with the majority of occupied natural islets concentrated in the Western Isles. In light of this, it is difficult to say island settlement is a generalised, widespread phenomenon in Scotland. In reality, only a handful of areas such as the Hebrides, the Machars, Loch Awe,

Loch Tay, Loch Lomond, maritime Argyll and sections of the Great Glen south of Loch Ness see anything approaching ubiquity.

4.2.3 Packwerk or Stone?

Argyll is a transitional area for island dwelling typologies in the sense that the entire gamut of materials and construction techniques are found here ranging from packwerk, stone and timber, to purely stone. This applies to both artificial islands and the superstructure (i.e. building or walling) on top. Therefore one sees both lowland, peat and brushwood and highland types of varying amounts of stone and timber in addition to completely stone 'Hebridean' types (*cf* Henderson 1998). A range of islet sizes (figs. 4.5 & 4.6) and construction methods are visible throughout this particular area. Indeed, marked variation is present from the typical view of artificial highland sites as simply stone and timber variants of 'lowland' crannogs with their largely packwerk construction (*cf* Henderson 1998). The little known Durry Loch site (NR62SE2) near Campbeltown in Argyll was partially excavated in the late 19th century and found to consist of a 'substructure of branches and twigs, covered with a layer of clay and stones' (McInnes 1935:26; RCAHMS 1971: 94) while the equally obscure site of Loch Dughaill I (NR75 NE5), some 37km NNE, was constructed using timber, stone and brushwood revetted with timber piles, yet utilised a stone causeway (Munro 1893: 211) – truly a hybrid of techniques which shows that no particular 'recipe' exists for the construction of wholly artificial islets. Yet in the islet settlement record of maritime Argyll the similarity to sites in the Western Isles, i.e. all stone, does become increasingly apparent.

Not only does the physical composition of many artificial islets show parallels with Hebridean sites; stone superstructures or Atlantic roundhouses also begin to appear with increased frequency in western Argyll through recent survey (Cavers 2006: 276; 2009: 6). Unsurprisingly, the Inner Hebrides themselves present even closer parallels to forms seen in both the Western Isles and Atlantic Ireland. This dynamic is visible at Loch Allallaidh, Islay (NR45 NW2), which contains the remains of a 'ringfort' broadly related to Irish cashels, while the island itself is of artificial construction (Gilles *et al* 1968: 10; Holley 1996: 194). Coincidentally, the RCAHMS lists the site is as a 'fortified island' rather than a crannog despite it being entirely artificial; again this once again highlights issues with the classification of island dwellings. Examples of a physical link with Hebridean typologies mesh well with models of Atlantic Scottish contact and identity via the sea, and should be seen not as

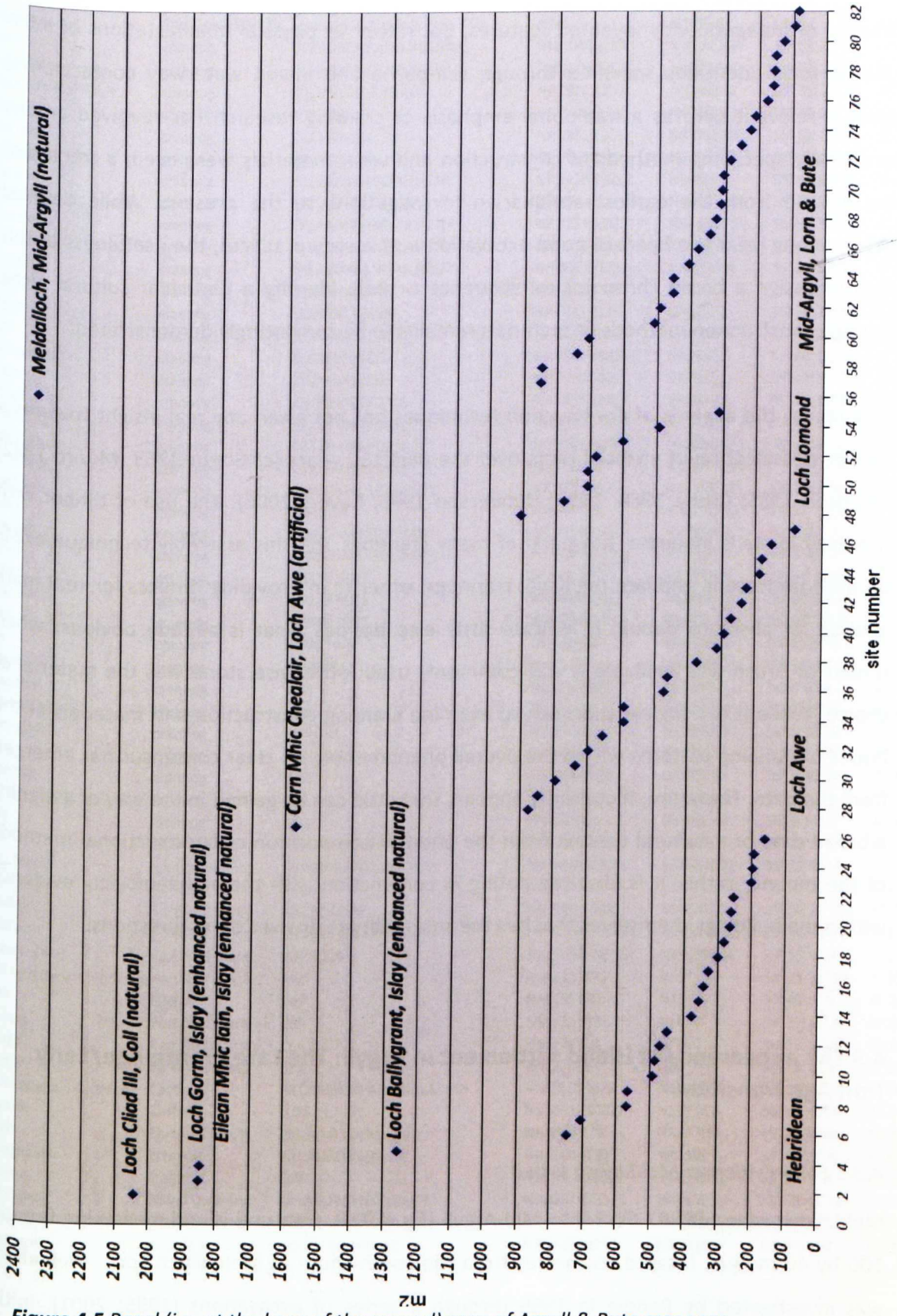


Figure 4.5 *Basal (i.e. at the base of the mound) area of Argyll & Bute crannogs.*

unusual or independently invented features, but rather as physical manifestations of inter-related social identities solidified through sea-borne and inland waterway contacts. This point is relevant here as a traditional emphasis of crannog research has revolved around empirically specifying methods of construction and what materials were used, a trend that has existed from the earliest antiquarian investigations to the present. While detailed observations lie at the heart of good excavation and survey practices, the usefulness of this data to assign a broad chronological sequence or help identify a particular cultural niche through construction methods or materials remains to be convincingly demonstrated.

As a result, the analysis of construction techniques has not given any real insight towards a clearer classification of artificial islets over the past 150 years (*cf* Grigor 1863; Munro 1882; Morrison 1985; Crone 1988, 1993; Henderson 1998; Cavers 2006). The use of timber with mortised joints is indeed a 'hallmark' of many crannogs, yet this assembly technique exists on both prehistoric and late medieval crannogs; other than providing timbers for tool mark analysis or absolute dating, it indicate little else besides what is already obvious: when timber or brush was available it was commonly used; otherwise stone was the material of choice. While it is a logical approach to examine crannog construction and materials in the hopes of defining patterns within the overall phenomenon, no clear consensus has emerged from the data. Therefore, it currently appears that little can be gained in the way of assigning a broad date or a cultural context from the physical composition or constructional methods of the mound; rather it is absolute dating in conjunction with the archaeological evidence within the buildings themselves that has the sole ability to answer these questions.

4.3 The appearance of island settlement in Argyll: The Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition

4.3.1 Early Evidence: Meldalloch Island

Meldalloch Island (NR97 SW34) in Mid-Argyll (fig. 4.7) is a natural island measuring broadly 100 by 40 meters, located 65 metres from the south shore of Meldalloch Loch. Meldalloch was investigated by Rennie in 1995 through a series of excavations (1995; 2001). Initial attention was directed to two West Highland longhouses when the remains of a palisaded

Site Name	Site Type (NMRS)	Location in Argyll & Bute	NGR	NMRS No.	Long.	Lat.
Inistrynich	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 1084 2350	NN12SW 6	56° 21' 58" N	5° 3' 49" W
Eilean An Stalcair	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 2904 4252	NN24SE 1	56° 32' 36" N	4° 46' 54" W
Carn Daibhidh-Not likely	crannog	KILDALTON AND OA	NR 2988 4210	NR24SE 12	55° 35' 50" N	6° 17' 23" W
Loch Gorm	crannog	KILCHOMAN	NR 2406 6581	NR26NW 16	55° 48' 23" N	6° 24' 19" W
Ardnave Loch	crannog	KILCHOMAN	NR 2831 7263	NR27SE 18	55° 52' 11" N	6° 20' 38" W
Loch Langeadail	crannog	KILCHOMAN	NR 2660 7127	NR27SE 27	55° 51' 23" N	6° 22' 10" W
Loch Barradil	crannog	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 3928 6361	NR36SE 5	55° 47' 43" N	6° 9' 41" W
Loch Nan Diol	crannog	KILDALTON AND OA	NR 432 481	NR44NW 38	55° 39' 30" N	6° 4' 60" W
Loch Nan Deala	crannog	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4253 6881	NR46NW 5	55° 50' 37" N	6° 6' 50" W
Loch Ballygrant	crannog	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4057 6638	NR46NW 19	55° 49' 12" N	6° 8' 36" W
Loch Staoisha	crannog	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4062 7123	NR47SW 4	55° 51' 51" N	6° 8' 47" W
Clochkeil	crannog	CAMPBELTOWN	NR 6672 2375	NR62SE 1	55° 27' 5" N	5° 41' 24" W
Durry Loch	crannog	CAMPBELTOWN	NR 6781 2236	NR62SE 2	55° 26' 22" N	5° 40' 17" W
Mill Loch	crannog	GIGHA AND CARA	NR 6440 5030	NR65SW 9	55° 41' 20" N	5° 44' 56" W
Lochan Dughaill	crannog	KILCALMONELL	NR 7904 5862	NR75NE 5	55° 46' 13" N	5° 31' 26" W
Loch Ciaran	crannog	KILCALMONELL	NR 7778 5403	NR75SE 3	55° 43' 42" N	5° 32' 27" W
Eilean Tigh	crannog	SOUTH KNAPDALE	NR 7554 6848	NR76NE 1	55° 51' 23" N	5° 35' 15" W
Loch A' Bhaillidh	crannog	SOUTH KNAPDALE	NR 7556 6331	NR76SE 5	55° 48' 39" N	5° 34' 60" W
Loch Coille-Bharr	crannog	NORTH KNAPDALE	NR 7788 8949	NR78NE 8	56° 2' 45" N	5° 34' 5" W
Lochan Taynish	crannog	NORTH KNAPDALE	NR 741 855	NR78NW 14		5° 37' 27" W
Loch Leathan	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NR 8745 9835	NR89NE 11	56° 7' 48" N	5° 25' 17" W
Asgog Loch	crannog	KILFINAN	NR 947 704	NR97SW 22	55° 52' 59" N	5° 16' 58" W
Loch Glashan	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NR 9159 9249	NR99SW 1	56° 4' 44" N	5° 21' 3" W
Loch Loran	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NR 9099 9069	NR99SW 5	56° 3' 45" N	5° 21' 33" W1
Loch Quien	crannog	NORTH BUTE	NS 0618 5928	NS05NE 11	55° 47' 14" N	5° 5' 34" W
Loch Quien II	crannog	NORTH BUTE	NS 0656 5988	NS05NE 12	55° 47' 34" N	5° 5' 13" W
Loch Dhu	crannog	NORTH BUTE	NS 0664 6176	NS06SE 16	55° 48' 35" N	5° 5' 12" W
Loch Eck	crannog	STRACHUR	NS 140 946	NS19SW 3	56° 6' 29" N	4° 59' 29" W
Drumhead	crannog	CARDROSS	NS 33 79	NS37NW 8	55° 58' 30" N	4° 40' 36" W
Elan-Rossdhu	crannog	Luss	NS 3595 8937	NS38NE 3	56° 4' 6" N	4° 38' 11" W
Auchintullich Bay	crannog	Luss	NS 356 868	NS38NE 31	56° 2' 45" N	4° 38' 23" W
Auchenheglish	crannog	BONHILL	NS 367 840	NS38SE 23	56° 1' 16" N	4° 37' 13" W
Arden	crannog	BONHILL	NS 367 842	NS38SE 53	56° 1' 22" N	4° 37' 14" W
Camstraddan	crannog	LUSS	NS 3598 9198	NS39SE 6	56° 5' 30" N	4° 38' 17" W
Luss	crannog	Luss	NS 361 932	NS39SE 13	56° 6' 12" N	4° 38' 8" W
Swan Isle	crannog	Luss	NS 361 914	NS39SE 69	56° 5' 14" N	4° 38' 4" W
Dun Ban	Island Dwelling	KILNINIAN AND KILMORE	NM 3841 4160	NM34SE 1	56° 29' 37" N	6° 15' 3" W
Rubha Na Moine	Island Dwelling	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8981 2807	NM82NE 22	56° 23' 51" N	5° 24' 23" W
Eilean Amalaig	Fortified Island	Torosay	NM 7079 2994	NM72NW 1	56° 24' 20" N	5° 43' 1" W
An Fhir Mhoir	Fortified Island	KILCHOMAN	NR 2637 6932	NR26NE 4	55° 50' 21" N	6° 22' 20" W
Loch Allallaidh	Fortified Island	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4194 5799	NR45NW 2	55° 44' 44" N	6° 6' 47" W
Melldalloch Island	Fortified Island	KILFINAN	NR 93762 74518	NR97SW 34	55° 55' 9" N	5° 18' 7" W
Caisteal Eoghainn a' Chinn Bhig	Fortified Island	Mull	NM 631 307	N/D	56° 24' 33" N	5° 50' 26" W
Loch Fada	island	Coll	NM 256 620	N/D	56° 40' 9" N	6° 28' 47" W
Loch Urbhaig	Fortified Island	Coll	NM 231 578	N/D	56° 37' 48" N	6° 30' 57" W
Bally Hough?	Fortified Island	Coll	NM 174 584	N/D	56° 37' 55" N	6° 36' 33" W
Loch Cliad III?	Fortified Island	Coll	NM 208 584	N/D	56° 38' 3" N	6° 33' 14" W
Caisteal Na Nigham Ruaidhe	Castle	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9166 1375	NM91SW1	56° 16' 14" N	5° 21' 59" W
Inchgalbraith	Castle	LUSS	NS 36912 90321	NS39 SE 8	56° 04' 40" N	4° 37' 19" W
Tangy Loch	Fortified House	Killean & Kilchenzie	NR 6956 2796	NR62 NE7	55°29' 26" N	5° 36' 57" W
Lochan Dughaill II	crannog	KILCALMONELL	NR 7904 5862	NR75NE 5	55°46' 12" N	5° 31' 35" W
Dun Anlaimh	crannog	Coll	NM 1884 5684	NM15NE 3	56° 37' 7" N	6° 35' 4" W
Eilean Mhuireill	Island Dwelling	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 3867 6733	NR36NE 23	55° 49' 41" N	6° 10' 28" W
Eilean Mhic Iain	Island Dwelling	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4099 6526	NR46NW 18	55° 48' 38" N	6° 8' 9" W
Eilean Na Circe	Island Dwelling	NORTH KNAPDALE	NR 7669 8928	NR78NE 3	56° 2' 37" N	5° 35' 14" W

Figure 4.6a *Spatial data for crannogs in Argyll & Bute.*

Site Name	Site Type (NMRS)	Location in Argyll & Bute	NGR	NMRS No.	Long.	Lat.
Eilean Mhic Chonnill	crannog	Tiree	NL 9695 4677	NL94NE 10	56° 30' 52" N	6° 55' 42" W
Eilean Aird Nam Brathan	crannog	Tiree	NL 9739 4704	NL94NE 11	56° 31' 3" N	6° 55' 20" W
Loch Na Gile	crannog	Tiree	NM 0260 4819	NM04NW 27	56° 31' 54" N	6° 50' 16" W
Loch Na Buaile	crannog	Tiree	NM 0338 4489	NM04SW 3	56° 30' 6" N	6° 49' 21" W
Loch Anlaimh	crannog	Coll	NM 1885 5581	NM15NE 11	56° 36' 35" N	6° 35' 1" W
Loch Breachacha	crannog	Coll	NM 1561 5304	NM15SE 2	56° 34' 57" N	6° 37' 57" W
Loch An Duin	crannog	Coll	NM 2125 5781	NM25NW 1	56° 37' 44" N	6° 32' 48" W
Loch Cliad I	crannog	Coll	NM 2074 5883	NM25NW 7	56° 38' 15" N	6° 33' 21" W
Loch Cliad II	crannog	Coll	NM 2074 5883	NM25NW 7	"	"
Loch Na Cloiche	crannog	Coll	NM 2406 6106	NM26SW 29	56° 38' 15" N	6° 33' 21" W
Loch Ba	crannog	Mull	NM 5548 3897	NM53NE 1	56° 28' 43" N	5° 58' 22" W
An Dubh Aird	crannog	Mull	NM 579 368	NM53NE 2	56° 27' 40" N	5° 55' 49" W
Gruline	crannog	Mull	NM 563 390	NM53NE 3	56° 28' 48" N	5° 57' 30" W
Gruline II	crannog	Mull	NM 5513 3919	NM53NE 5	56° 28' 49" N	5° 58' 40" W
Sgeir Carnaich	crannog	KILBRANDON AND KILCHATTAN	NM 7515 1293	NM71SE 11	56° 15' 19" N	5° 37' 53" W
Loch Na Beiste?	crannog		NM 813 058	NM80NW 25	56° 11' 40" N	5° 31' 32" W
Lochan A' Chlaiginn	crannog	CRAIGNISH	NM 819 058	NM80NW 26	56° 11' 41" N	5° 30' 57" W
Inverliever	crannog	KILMARTIN	NM 8894 0484	NM80SE 17	56° 11' 20" N	5° 24' 9" W
Ederline Boathouse	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 8821 0394	NM80SE 18	56° 10' 50" N	5° 24' 47" W
Loch Ederline	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 8671 0252	NM80SE 39	56° 10' 3" N	5° 26' 10" W
Loch Ederline II?	crannog	Kilmichael Glassary	NM 8673 0289	NM80SE 40	56° 10' 12" N	5° 26' 11" W
Kilneuair	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 8892 0394	NM80SE 48	56° 10' 51" N	5° 24' 6" W
Policeman's Bay	crannog	KILMARTIN	NM 891 049	NM80SE 61	56° 11' 24" N	5° 23' 58" W
Loch An Daimh	crannog	CRAIGNISH	NM 8618 1102	NM81SE 2	56° 14' 36" N	5° 27' 9" W1
Loch A' Phearsain	crannog	KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD	NM 8553 1351	NM81SE 3	56° 15' 56" N	5° 27' 51" W
Loch A' Mhuillin	crannog	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8573 2936	NM82NE 1	56° 24' 26" N	5° 28' 26" W
Loch Nell	crannog	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8835 2662	NM82NE 23	56° 23' 3" N	5° 25' 47" W
Grianan Mor	crannog	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8977 2752	NM82NE 24	56° 23' 35" N	5° 24' 28" W
Loch Seil	crannog	KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD	NM 8039 2029	NM82SW 8	56° 19' 27" N	5° 33' 7" W
Carn Ailpein/not a site	crannog	KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD	NM 8322 2255	NM82SW 11	56° 20' 43" N	5° 30' 31" W
Carn Mhic Chealair	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9579 0980	NM90NE 1	56° 14' 13" N	5° 17' 43" W
Eredine	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9688 0978	NM90NE 2	56° 14' 11" N	56° 14' 11" N
Fincharn	crannog	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 9027 0448	NM90SW 5	56° 11' 10" N	5° 22' 52" W
Ardchonnell	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9784 1220	NM91SE 9	56° 15' 33" N	5° 15' 54" W
Barr Phort	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9637 1047	NM91SE 10	56° 14' 33" N	5° 17' 16" W
Eilean Fraoch	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9211 1418	NM91SW 2	56° 16' 26" N	5° 21' 30" W
Moss Of Achnacree	crannog	ARDCHATTAN AND MUCKAIRN	NM 9107 3669	NM93NW 14	56° 28' 34" N	5° 23' 38" W
An Doirlinn	crannog	ARDCHATTAN AND MUCKAIRN	NM 9011 4239	NM94SW 7	56° 31' 36" N	5° 24' 48" W
Carn Dubh	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NN 0013 1775	NN01NW 4	56° 18' 34" N	5° 13' 55" W
Ardanaiseig	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0913 2487	NN02SE 6	56° 22' 37" N	5° 5' 31" W
Carn An Roin	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0648 2237	NN02SE 15	56° 21' 12" N	5° 8' 1" W
Rockhill	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 07800 22320	NN02SE 16	56° 21' 14" N	5° 6' 40" W
Rockhill II	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 07176 22090	NN02SE 17	56° 21' 7" N	5° 7' 20" W
Ceann Mara	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 073 2279	NN02SE 18	56° 21' 27" N	5° 7' 10" W
Eilean Seileachan	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0906 2417	NN02SE 19	56° 22' 14" N	5° 5' 35" W
Inishail Church	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0959 2448	NN02SE 20	56° 22' 25" N	5° 5' 7" W
Loch Rathilt	Fortified Island	Coll	NM 2412 6160	NM36 SW20	56° 39' 56" N	6° 30' 18" W
Lochan Na Gealaich	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 04967 23377	NN02SW 14	56° 21' 42" N	5° 9' 31" W
Sonachan	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NN 04266 20697	NN02SW 17	56° 20' 14" N	5° 10' 5" W
Loch An Droighinn	crannog	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NN 0211 2389	NN02SW 22	56° 21' 58" N	5° 12' 16" W
Fasnacloich	crannog	LISMORE AND APPIN	NN 0209 4740	NN04NW 1	56° 34' 36" N	5° 13' 26" W
Dubh Loch	crannog	INVERARAY	NN 1138 1079	NN11SW 4	56° 15' 5" N	5° 2' 46" W
Loch Awe I	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 1215 2647	NN12NW 16	56° 23' 33" N	5° 2' 40" W
Achlian	crannog	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 1150 2475	NN12SW 5	56° 22' 37" N	5° 3' 11" W

***Figure 4.6b** Spatial data for crannogs in Argyll & Bute.*

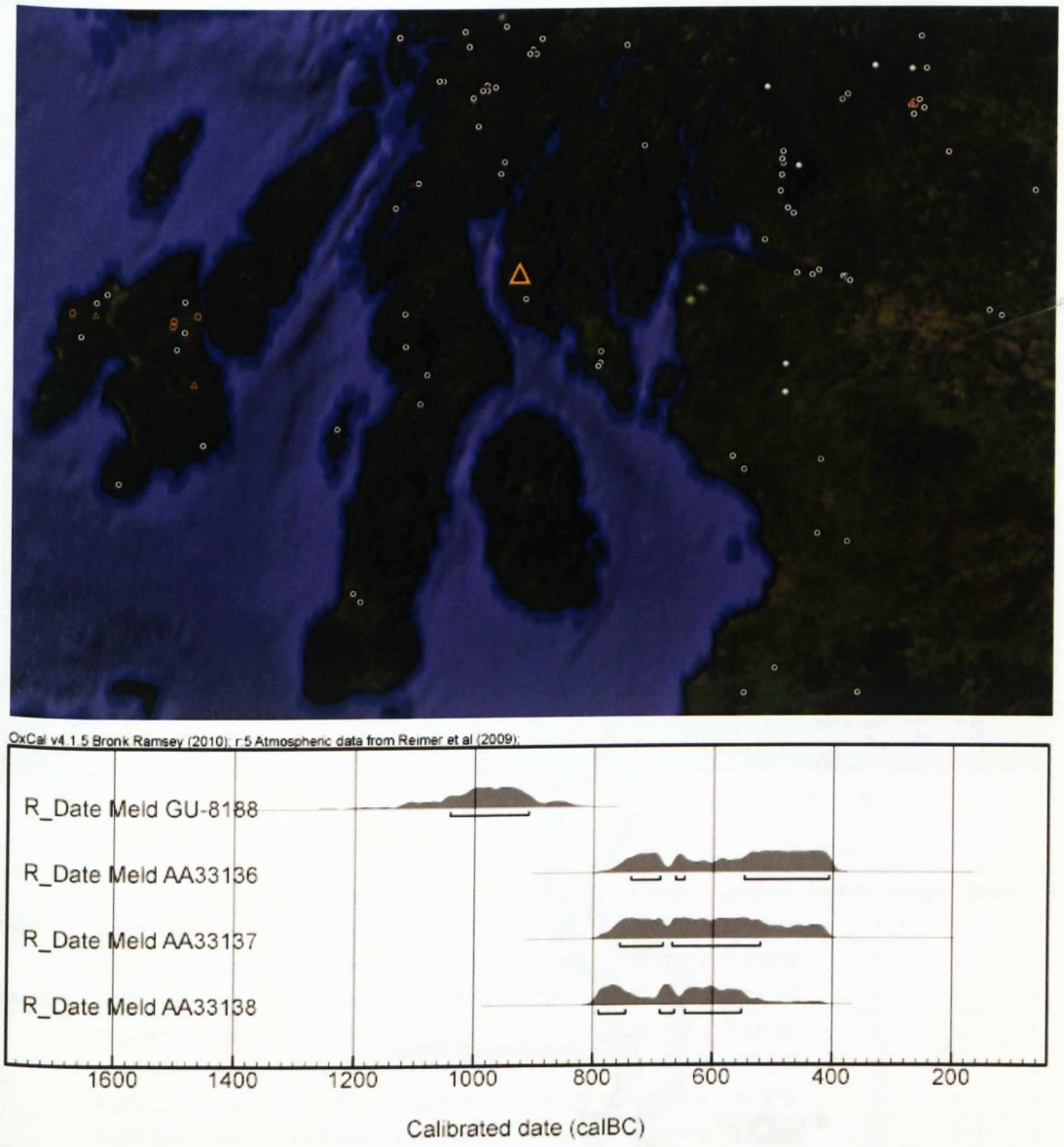


Figure 4.7 *Location of Meldalloch Island in mid-Argyll with radiocarbon dates below (Rennie & Newall 2001).*

enclosure and roundhouses were discovered, while prior to excavation, low water had revealed a stone causeway extending from the southern point of the island to the foreshore.

The earliest date from Meldalloch, GU-8188 (figs. 4.4 & 4.7) was obtained from a palisaded boundary along the shoreward facing southern half while the later dates stem from the roundhouse which was apparently constructed several centuries afterwards. While the possibility of relict material is responsible for the earlier date, it is likely that the roundhouse represents later activity on a site that had already witnessed occupation for some time. Indeed, the re-use of the island for the Post Medieval longhouses attests to this continuance of activity on the island. The construction of the palisade in the middle to late Bronze Age is

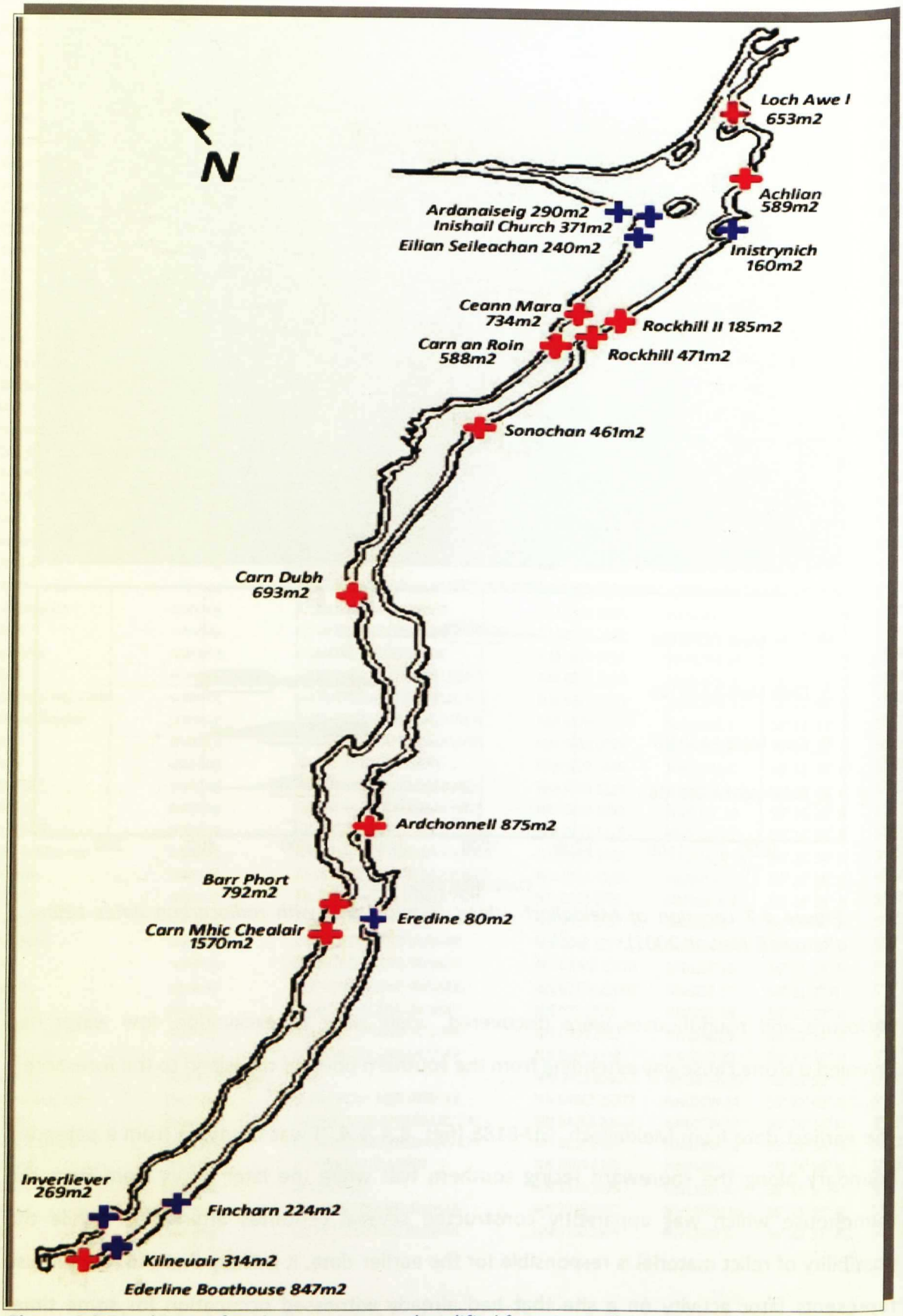
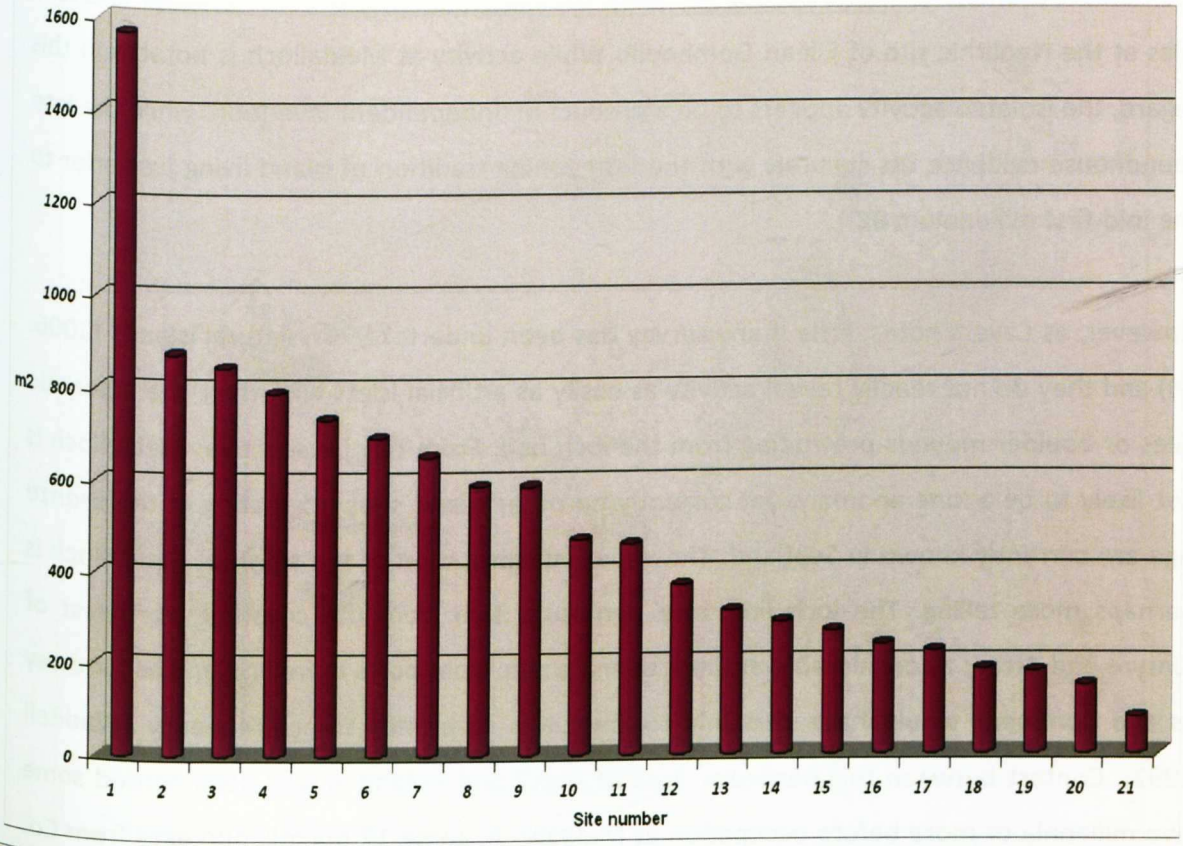


Figure 4.8 *Basal Area of Loch Awe crannogs (modified from McArdle's 1973 data).*



	Name of Site	Council		Parish/Island	NGR	HMRS	Latitude	Longitude	Located?	Surveyed?	Excavated?	Area M2
1	Carn Mhic Chealair	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 9579 0980	NM90NE 1	56° 14' 13" N	5° 17' 43" W	1	1	5	1570
2	Ardchonnell	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 9784 1220	NM91SE 9	56° 15' 33" N	5° 15' 54" W	1	1	5	875
3	Ederline Boathouse	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 8821 0394	NM80SE 18	56° 10' 50" N	5° 24' 47"	1	1	3	847
4	Barr Phort	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 9637 1047	NM91SE 10	56° 14' 33" N	5° 17' 16"	1	1	5	792
5	Ceann Mara	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 073 2279	NN02SE 18	56° 21' 27" N	5° 7' 10" W	1	1	5	734
6	Carn Dubh	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 0013 1775	NN01NW 4	56° 18' 34" N	5° 13' 55" W	1	1	5	693
7	Loch Awe I	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 1215 2647	NN12NW 16	56° 23' 33" N	5° 2' 40" W	1	1	5	653
8	Achlian	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 1150 2475	NN12SW 5	56° 22' 37" N	5° 3' 11" W	1	1	5	589
9	Carn An Roin	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 0648 2237	NN02SE 15	56° 21' 12" N	5° 8' 1" W	1	1	5	588
10	Rockhill	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 07800 22320	NN02SE 16	56° 21' 14" N	5° 6' 40" W	1	1	5	471
11	Sonachan	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 04266 20697	NN02SW 17	56° 20' 14"	5° 10' 5" W	1	1	5	461
12	Inishail Church	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 0959 2448	NN02SE 20	56° 22' 25" N	5° 5' 7" W	1	1	5	371
13	Kilneuair	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 8892 0394	NM80SE 48	56° 10' 51" N	5° 24' 6" W	1	1	5	314
14	Ardanaiseig	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 0913 2487	NN02SE 6	56° 22' 37" N	5° 5' 31" W	1	1	5	290
15	Inverliever	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 8894 0484	NM80SE 17	56° 11' 20" N	5° 24' 9" W	1	1	5	269
16	Eilian Seileachan	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 0906 2417	NN02SE 19	56° 22' 14" N	5° 5' 35" W	1	1	5	240
17	Fincharn	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 9027 0448	NM90SW 5	56° 11' 10" N	5° 22' 52" W	1	1	5	224
18	Rockhill II (Keppochan)	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe		NN02SE 17	56° 21' 7" N	5° 7' 20" W				185
19	Policeman's Bay	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 891 049	NM80SE 61	56° 11' 24" N	5° 23' 58" W	4	3	5	180
20	Inistrynich	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NN 1084 2350	NN12SW 6	56° 21' 58" N	5° 3' 49" W	1	1	5	150
21	Eredine	Argyll & Bute	Awe	Loch Awe	NM 9688 0978	NM90NE 2	56° 14' 11" N	56° 14' 11" N	1	1	5	80

Figures 4.9 *Data and graph of basal area for Loch Awe crannogs. Sites 14-21 fall below what can be considered a 'useful' threshold for occupation at 300m² taking into account settling and water level fluctuation.*

the earliest example of island occupation from the mainland, only preceded in the Western Isles at the Neolithic site of Eilean Domhnuill. While activity at Meldalloch is notable in this regard, the isolated activity appears to be a product of 'independent invention' while the late roundhouse evidence fits squarely with the burgeoning tradition of island living just prior to the mid-first millennium BC.

However, as Cavers notes, little if any survey has been undertaken on natural islands (2006: 88) and they do not readily reveal activity as easily as artificial islets with their characteristic piles or boulder mounds protruding from the loch bed. From this perspective, Meldalloch is not likely to be a lone anomaly, yet currently no other island sites originating in the Bronze Age are currently known in Scotland. The wider interpretation of the siting of Meldalloch is perhaps more telling. The loch lies on a peninsula 3km from the coastline northeast of Kintyre and Arran; a considerable amount of sea traffic from ports in Ireland and as far away as the Continent would have certainly reached this area with some frequency (Waddell 1992). Contact between this particular area of Argyll and Ireland is well documented some two millennia or more before occupation at Meldalloch; some 17 porcellanite axes from Co. Antrim dating to 3800-2500 BC have been discovered in the area while others were found as far away as Kent (Sheridan 1986: 20). The implications of continued contact would hold especially true during the Bronze Age, as shipments containing tin and imported goods would certainly have passed through the area. In this regard, the immediate maritime location of Meldalloch would have conceivably witnessed the frequent passing of long-distance seafarers en route to their destinations within the Irish Sea Zone.

4.3.2 Iron Age and Early Historic crannogs in Argyll: Ederline, Loch Avich, Loch Leathan and Dubh Loch

Moving into the main floruit of crannog construction during the late Iron Age and Early Historic Period, Argyll is well represented. Although dates during the later prehistoric primarily come from radiocarbon samples rather than identifiable assemblages, Early Historic sites have produced some narrowly datable finds. Ederline Boathouse (NM80 SE18) was first investigated as part of the ground-breaking McArdle survey of Loch Awe crannogs in 1972 which employed military divers to investigate some 60 potential sites in the 35km long loch, 20 of which were confirmed (McArdle 1973). Ederline (fig. 4.10) lies approximately 100m

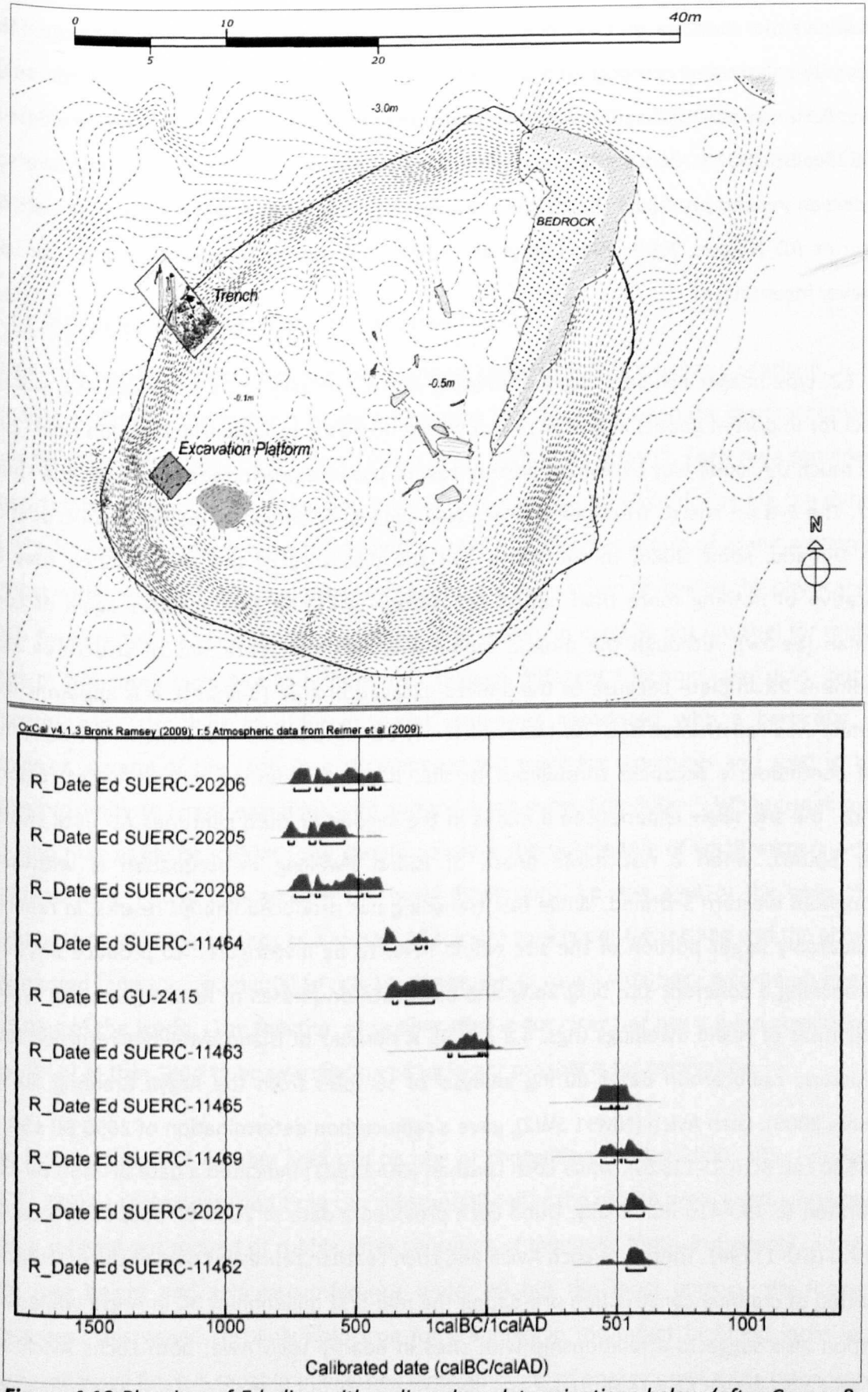


Figure 4.10 *Planview of Ederline with radiocarbon determinations below (after Cavers & Henderson 2004).*

offshore at the southern end of Loch Awe within 2km of six other known crannogs. The seasonally submerged crannog measures 37m by 27m and 2.5m in height (McArdle 1973; Cavers & Henderson 2005: 285). While radiocarbon samples from Ederline provided a date of 790-520calBC (SUERC-20205; figs. 4.4) from an oak pile, excavation in 2004 by Cavers & Henderson instead produced sherds of E-ware pottery indicating activity in the 6thor early 7th centuries AD (Cavers 2006: 290; Campbell 2005: 292) indicating over a millennia of use, however intermittent.

The 'E2' type beaker exhibited signs of heating which, contrary to its initial use at a storage vessel for imported goods, indicates re-use with a domestic or industrial function (*ibid*: 292-3) in much the same way as Roman pottery saw re-use in domestic contexts from the south west. The E-ware sherds from Ederline are also suggestive of contemporaneous occupation with Dunadd, some 20km to the south, yet the discovery of the sherds alone may be indicative of nothing more than casual deposition - an issue that surfaces again at Loch Leathan (below). Although the mound taphonomy and interpretations of structures atop Ederline is incomplete because of the limited excavation area (3 x 5m^2), it is apparent that Ederline was constructed and used intermittently during the mid-first millennium BC rather than continuously occupied throughout its life. If use at Ederline mirrors wider regional trends, the site likely experienced a hiatus in the second or third centuries AD until shortly after 500AD, when a noticeable phase of island dwelling re-occupation is witnessed throughout western Scotland. While test trenching has produced limited results, in reality a considerably larger portion of the site would need to be investigated to produce anything approaching a coherent site biography and elaborate on phases of re-use given the typical basal areas of island dwellings (figs. 4.8 & 4.9). A number of island dwellings returned later prehistoric radiocarbon dates during analysis of samples from the Argyll Crannog Survey (Cavers 2005). Loch Avich (NM91 SW2), gave a radiocarbon determination of 2650 BP ±50, or 810-530 cal. BC (GU-11920), while Loch Leathan (GU-11921) indicated a date of 2450 BP ±50, calibrated to 790-410 BC. Finally, Dubh Loch provided a date of 2030 BP ±50, or 170 cal. BC ±80 AD (GU-11294). Therefore Loch Avich and Loch Leathan represent part of the established tradition of crannog construction pre-dating the mid-first millennium BC in Argyll while their location also suggests a relationship with sites in nearby Loch Awe; both Lochs Avich and Leathan are located 5km from island dwelling clusters found in the southern end and central section of Loch Awe. In a more maritime landscape, Dubh Loch, 12km east of Loch Awe, is

connected to the extensive sea loch, Loch Fyne, by a 600m long channel in an area well-suited for maritime trade yet is still only 12km from Loch Awe. With the dating evidence now available from the surrounding sites suggesting contemporary occupation, the crannogs of Loch Awe create a network of inter-related islets while outliers such as Dubh Loch would possible serve as a first line of contact with maritime arrivals.

4.3.3 Loch Awe: re-considerations of island dwelling use

Given the nature of the evidence for crannog construction throughout Scotland, a later prehistoric date for the majority of the crannogs in Loch Awe has been the general consensus thus far (Morrison 1985; Henderson 1998; Cavers 2005). As a result, Loch Awe provides an opportunity to examine their size and proximity to each other while discussing the dynamic in which these islets may have functioned as part of a discreet group of island settlements almost within eyesight of one another moving up the loch. When reviewing the physical data, Loch Awe contains a wide range of crannog sizes which, in itself, is not unusual for multiple sites in the same loch. Not only does this suggest different functions and uses, but this disparity may also hint at different social structures associated with a particular site. However, several of the Loch Awe sites appear too small for structures and tend to be in close proximity to larger examples with surface areas exceeding 300m^2. While liveable sites on land may easily be <100m^2, one should consider the positioning of small islets in a large highland loch. Taking into account the basal dimensions, i.e. the area of the base of the crannog mound, 300m^2 stands as a more realistic size to account for settling and the ability of the mound (and the occupants) to remain dry on top in rough weather - a common event in this part of the world. The function of smaller sites is not clear nor has it been considered in any detail as they tend to be overshadowed by larger prospects for excavation.

The interpretation of liveable area can be one of contention (Holley 2000: 105; Henderson 2007: 289) as taphonomy and time can substantially alter the usable area, gradually reducing it to a splayed-out mound of rubble after centuries of hydraulic force. Put simply, a site can only lose height and gain circumference under all but the most unusual site-formation processes. This would certainly hold true for crannogs in the larger highland lochs where increased wave fetch is capable of exerting large amounts of energy upon a site (Morrison

1985: 62). Therefore it may be possible that the smaller crannog mounds were at one time capable of supporting structures prior to settlement of the mound or rising loch levels, yet the field drawings from the 1972 survey do not indicate collapse on this scale and suggest that the sites remain relatively unaltered from their original form. Analysis of the basal area from Loch Awe crannogs (figs. 4.8 & 4.9) indicates that the area of Ederline Boathouse, at 847m^2, is ranked amongst the larger crannogs that are indicative of permanent or at least seasonal habitations. For comparison, the majority of later prehistoric and Early Historic duns from Argyll have statistically indicated internal areas under 200m^2 (Niekie 1990: 137). Given that the recorded dimensions in fig. 4.8 are basal measurements, the useful area can be interpreted as a percentage of the basal size; here 66% will be considered a baseline while 50% is a more realistic figure. At 353m^2 in usable area based upon McArdle's calculations in 1972[3], this equates to 42% of the basal area. Therefore, Ederline Boathouse would provide room for at least one substantial structure with additional area for small outbuildings or area associated with agricultural or small industrial activities.

Beyond dating techniques and mound construction, an analysis of basal size and proportion within the group of Loch Awe sites is a fundamental starting point when attempting to distinguish the possible functions of the 'lesser crannogs' which contain insufficient space for dwellings. Therefore small, apparently uninhabitable islets present problems of interpretation considering that they do not appear to represent unfinished examples which simply were abandoned. While the larger prehistoric crannogs in Scotland can safely be interpreted as homesteads given the quantity of quern stones, ards and associated material recovered, the smaller crannogs have received little consideration as to function. This is more difficult to assess if a site is unsuitable for occupation due to size constraints. 13 crannogs in Loch Awe are over 300m^2 in basal area while six fall under this mark; one additional site, Eredine, is only some 80m^2.

4.3.4 The 'minor sites': discussion of possible functions

Several possible explanations arise when considering the Loch Awe sites in their local context. There are contrasting sizes throughout the loch, particularly when reviewing McArdle's estimations of what he considered to be usable area. He goes on to relate the

[3] McArdle's overall measurement of 25x18m of usable surface area for Ederline Boathouse equates to 353.25 m^2 as an ellipse. Morrison's own formula is length x width, treating the sites as rectilinear, though he points out these are only meant as rough guides.

marked variation in sizes: 'some [crannogs] so different from others, that only full excavation will sort out the reasons for the different shapes and sizes' (2009). At the southern end, Ederline Boathouse has the highest usable area, yet is neighboured by Inverliever, which has a usable area of only 40m^2. At the opposite end of the loch, Inistryinch stands at 25m^2 in usable area and is bordered by Achlian and Loch Awe I which have 300 and 400m^2 of usable area respectively. Also at the northern end are the larger sites of Eilean Seileachan and Inishail, near Ardanaiseig, which also has a scant 25m^2 of usable area. Similar examples exist throughout the highlands such as Oakbank crannog in Loch Tay which sees an adjacent circular extension just over 6m in diameter on the western flank of the site. Although this section has been excavated, to date it remains unpublished and perhaps could shed light on the nature and function of these sub-10m mounds. Whatever the purpose, it was well revetted with piles and was proportioned deliberately (Dixon 2004: fig. 40). The first interpretation roughly correlates to Morrison's view of the Loch Awe crannogs as boundary markers for adjacent homesteads (1985:78). The 'minor' sites (c. <200m^2 basal area) could serve this purpose while being inadequate for anything ostentatious in nature. A site under 200m^2 in size would have a maximum diameter of roughly 15m and a more realistic 10m when usable area is considered at an optimistic 66% limit. A 10m diameter would allow a timber roundhouse of no more than 75m^2; adequate for a small retreat but not very inspiring when one considers its location, perched in the margins of a large highland loch.

The second interpretation for the presence of the minor sites is a familiar phenomenon in the Western Isles: robbing of materials. It is notable that three of the four largest crannogs in Loch Tay are near the tiny site of Eredine. The largest of these is Carn Mhic Chealair at 1570m^2, which comprises an expanse of deliberately placed stones forming a massive submerged mound some 50 x 40m. Despite this large foundation, the usable area is estimated at only 18x16m (McArdle 1973; 2006). This leaves the impression of an unfinished site which perhaps proved too ambitious and was scaled down. Indeed, McArdle's survey showed that the mound measures some 6m in height along the eastern, loch facing section and represents a massive display of effort before it even approached the surface of the loch. It stands as a possibility that either the stones or the available labour resources from Eredine were siphoned off and used here or at Barr Phort immediately north. Given the voracious appetite for stone robbing witnessed in other areas of Scotland, particularly in the Western Isles, and the ease at which stone can be transported in logboats in comparison to lugging it

across land, the sourcing of existing islets for materials may well have been a more attractive proposition than gathering large quantities of stone on land.

One consideration for the use of smaller crannogs in particular may appear trivial, yet was certainly not for those who lived their lives outside: midges. Anyone who has spent any length of time in Scotland will attest to the nuisance level caused by these tiny insects, which can range from annoying to temporarily maddening, subject to wind and weather conditions. As modern fisherman can attest, moving away from shore rapidly reduces the number of midges due to the wind and lack of vegetation. This would have obvious benefits for island living in the summer, even if temporarily using small offshore sites. Several other archaeologists have also voiced this sentiment; it was remarked by a surveyor during excavation at Ederline, workers preferred returning to the crannog specifically for this reason (Ewan Campbell & Lloyd Laing, *pers comm*). In fact, smaller sites would hold an advantage by virtue of having less cover or vegetation for midges to shelter from the wind. Retiring away from main settlement areas in the summer months, one would avoid decaying midden waste and food scraps which can draw midges; on a crannog this refuse can simply be discarded into the loch. The presence of midges alone may not seem like enough reason to warrant constructing a crannog, yet escaping them makes an attractive case for the seasonal use of small sites, a pragmatic aspect that has not received any serious consideration.

A final and thought provoking hypothesis for the role of minor crannogs sees their possible use as excarnation platforms to both ostentatiously display the dead and allow only certain scavengers such as *corvids*, or crows and magpies, access to the corpse thereby leaving the skeleton largely intact. While it should be pointed out evidence is yet to surface for crannogs in Loch Tay being involved with this ritual, there is possible evidence from Dun Vulan (5.6.4, below). As Chamberlin relates: 'The scattered distribution of disarticulated and fragmentary human bones is a common feature of Iron Age settlement contexts in Britain' (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2000: 288). The overall lack of Iron Age burials from Atlantic Scotland strongly suggests alternative practices were used. In a manner of speaking, 'no evidence' (i.e. burials) may suggest 'good evidence' for this hypothesis .The concept of excarnation as a means of naturally clearing the flesh and organs from bone has been used in Britain as a valid explanation for both mixtures of disarticulated body parts in a single context, or the appearance of disarticulated crania in areas of Iron Age Britain (Cunliffe 1996: 292; Williams

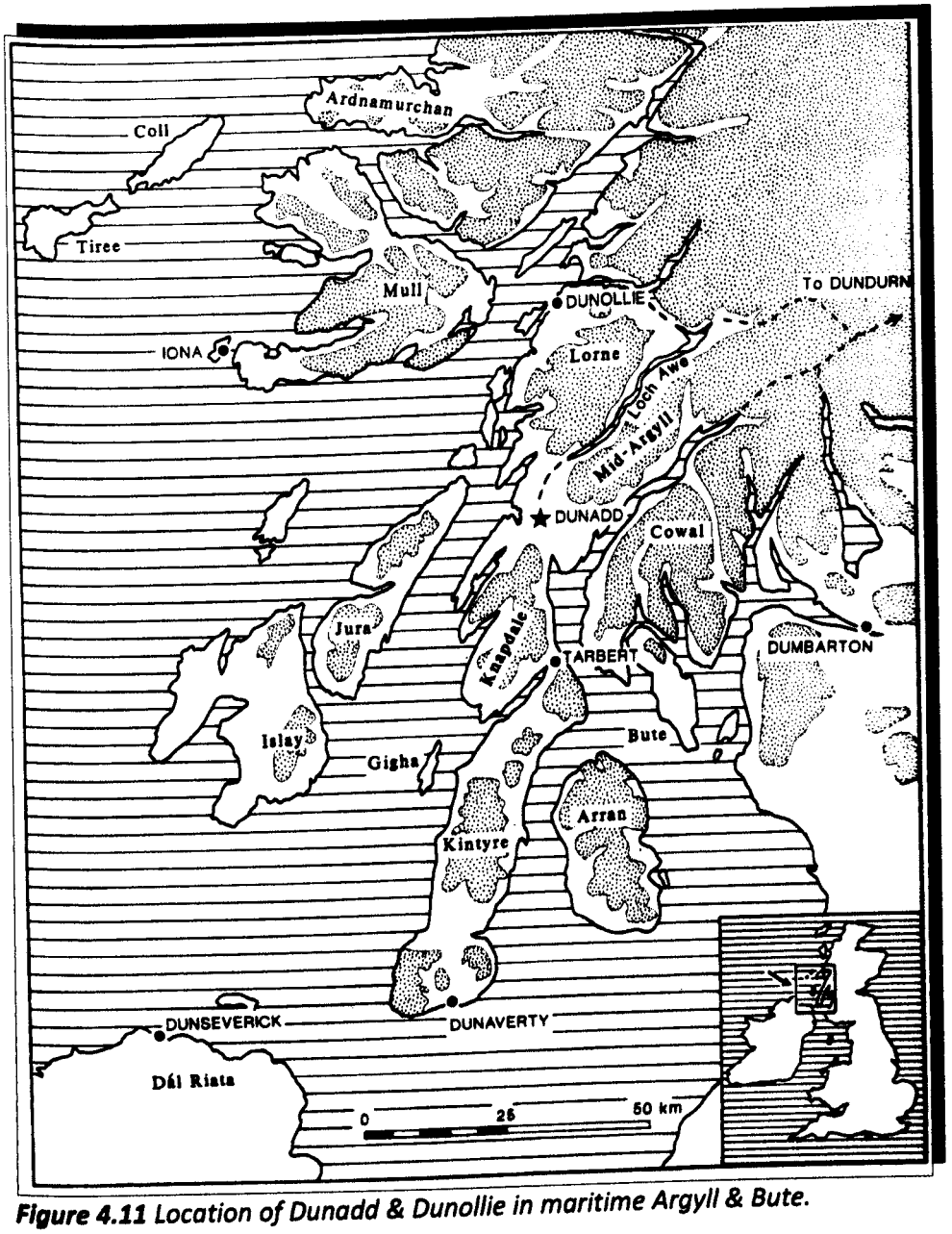


***Figure 4.11** Location of Dunadd & Dunollie in maritime Argyll & Bute.*

1981:15). By placing a body on a small crannog for defleshing, excessive disturbance or complete removal of the carcass by larger scavengers is prevented so that the bones can be collected for ritual once the process has finished. If left on land, a corpse can be completely dispersed quite quickly while one that is restricted to birds remains largely intact as only small bones can be carried away. An in-depth study of excarnation in Iron Age Britain by Carr & Knusel also points out that the process of excarnation provides time to grieve and allows time for feasting preparations while the corpse is in a liminal state between the living and the dead, only completing its journey to the 'land of the ancestors' once the process is complete (1997: 167-169).

Additionally, allowing access to only certain types of birds or animals may in itself hold symbolic significance. Meanwhile displaying the body on a crannog would draw the attention of those travelling along the loch margins either via boat or on foot, while also declaring control of the area. Although human burials or bone fragments are quite rare from crannogs, given the wide range of practices seen in the British Isles excarnation is certainly a plausible funerary practise. The existence of what may be termed unusual deposition rituals from a modern Western mind-set is also well documented, such as from Cladh Hallam, South Uist, where quartered remains were deposited in pits in domestic areas, mismatched body parts to form a single body and a burial where the person is holding their own canines attest to the range of what is demonstrated in Scotland during later prehistory (Parker Pearson & Sharples 1999). The amount of labour invested into these small mounds can be justified more easily when considering their use as part of ritual funerary practices for extended families or clans in much the same way earlier Neolithic chambered cairns both housed the dead and likely functioned as territorial markers.

4.4 Dál Riata and Argyll? The settlement evidence

The levels of interaction across the Irish Sea in prehistory remain obscure beyond the basic exchange of raw material and metalwork, especially during the height of the Bronze Age. However, by the Early Historic Period an opportunity surfaces to examine historical notices along with changes in the material assemblages which create a case study of interaction and cultural connections around the Irish Sea Zone. This study directly relates to questions regarding the distributions of island dwellings in both Scotland and Ireland. The following section progresses from the later prehistoric period in Argyll and examines the role of Early Historic Period crannogs in light of Irish influences and *vice versa*, while weighing the evidence for cultural continuity between the two areas. The bulk of archaeological material from island dwellings in Argyll thus far certainly indicates a period of re-use starting in the mid-first millennium AD. This phase of re-use in Argyll broadly corresponds with contemporaneous events in the south west, namely political tension and unrest initially involving the Kingdom of Strathclyde, then Rheged and Bernecia followed by a Norse hiatus. In Argyll, the re-use see at Ederline, Loch Glashan and Loch Seil can also be viewed in a

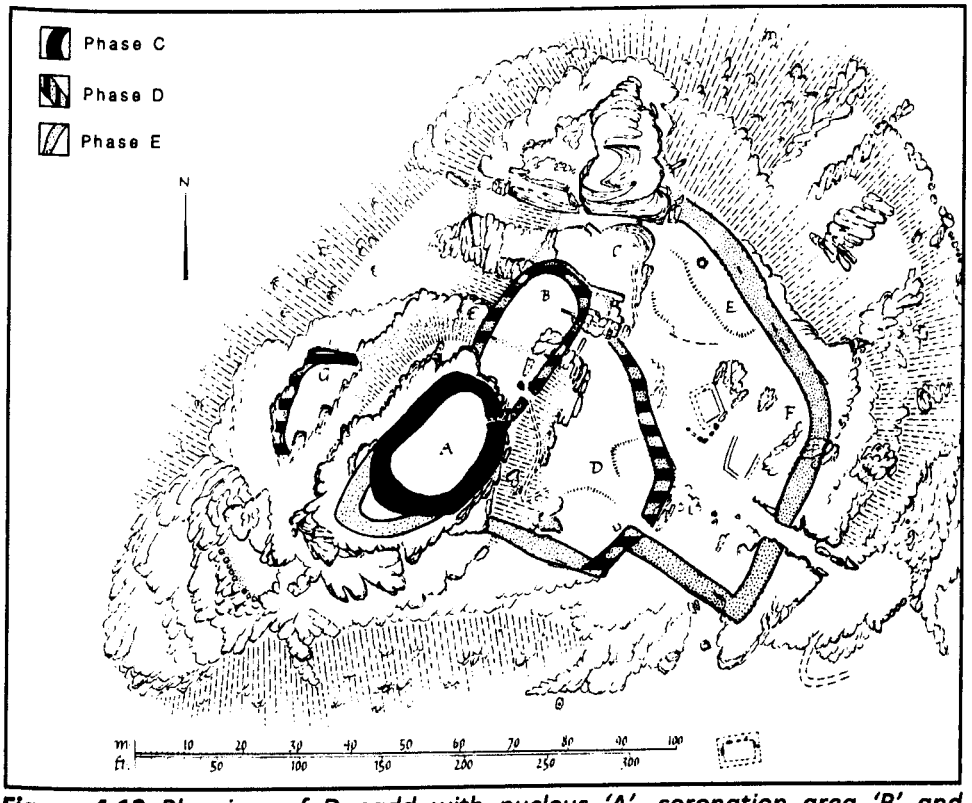


Figure 4.12 *Planview of Dunadd with nucleus 'A', coronation area 'B' and subsequent construction (after Lane & Campbell 2000).*

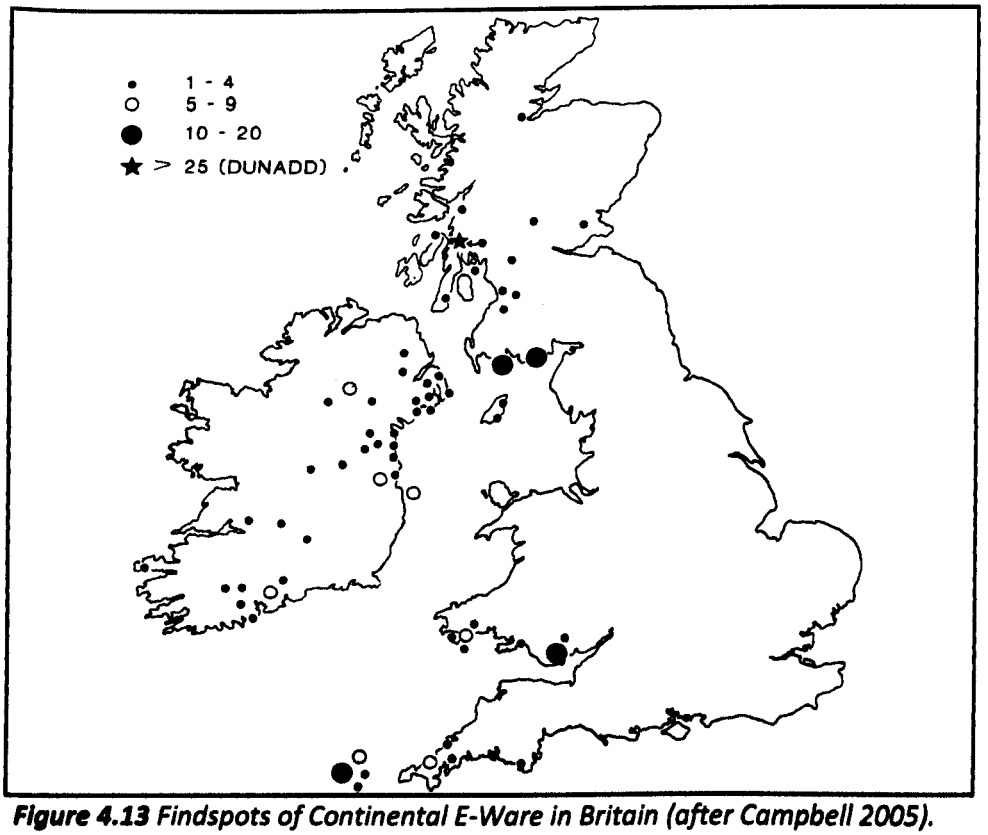


Figure 4.13 *Findspots of Continental E-Ware in Britain (after Campbell 2005).*

similar manner involving the rise of the Irish kingdom of Dál Riata and later disputes with the Picts, until the Norse Interlude in the mid-9th century.

4.4.1 Which came first: The Scotti or the Goidelic?

Initially, this section will discuss the validity of a Dál Riatic migration from Ireland into Argyll against the archaeological record by comparing similarities and variation in settlement forms and artefactual assemblages-most notably from crannogs. A landscape analysis emphasizing settlement types is regarded the most productive approach due to a material culture which remained virtually unchanged for almost a millennium in Atlantic Scotland (Scott 1960; Armit 1992; Harding 2004; Henderson 2007) and Ireland (Raftery 1994; O'Sullivan 1998). Although terrestrial settlement types will be considered as well, the emphasis will fall upon island dwellings as a common denominator between Scotland and Ireland where the degree of preservation and structural clarity is unparalleled in 'dry' sites.

The Early Historic period in Scotland (AD500-800) is typically perceived by historians as a time of migration when Fergus Mór mac Eirc and Dál Riata[4] settled in Argyll from Antrim (Bannerman 1974; Heywood 2001:92). Various accounts of this migration are also described in texts such as the Irish *Annals of Tigernach* and the *Annals of Ulster* as well as Adomnán's *Life of Coloumba,* the *Senchus Fer nAlban,* and *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People.* However, the topic remains controversial, and the notion of large-scale migration is still being debated in recent conferences by specialists such as Ewan Campbell[5]. In regards to prior contact between the two areas there is little question: 'That cultural continuities lasted for more than a thousand years is not in doubt, whether it took the form of Iona chroniclers' interests in Irish affairs or the appearance of Scottish events in Irish tales' (Sharpe 2000: 47). Furthermore, according to Adomnán's observations in *The Life of St. Columba*, the use of Irish, or perhaps more accurately Goidelic, for speech and placenames made Argyll distinct from surrounding areas of modern day Scotland (*ibid*, 48). Cummings also notes: 'Indeed an early (1165AD) form of Argyll was Arregaithel or Arregaichel, meaning 'the district of the Gaels' (1995:50). Three possible scenarios exist for a discussion of an Irish movement into western Scotland. First, there *was* an invasion and the native inhabitants of Argyll were driven out or forced to assimilate with newcomers from Antrim. This is the traditional view

[4]Dál Riata is the Gaelic name for the kingdom which occupied north east Ireland and much of Argyll between 500 and c.850 AD.

[5]The 'Roots of Nationhood' Conference contained a section on 'The Origins of Alba' and was held at the University of Glasgow in November 2009. Proceedings in press.

that historical records (and some historians) tend to support. Second, there is the possibility that only a ruling élite migrated to Argyll and that their language slowly took root (Campbell 2001: 286).

The third, and most probable concept, is that the Atlantic region had a 'lingua franca' originating centuries before the distinction was noted (Campbell 2001: 291; Cunliffe 2008: 257). To weigh the possibilities from linguistic perspective, one should bear in mind that regional languages can shift due to any number of social or political events; however this would require several generations to do so. A change in language need not imply mass migration took place. To make a modern comparison, the adaptation of English as a universal language of global commerce is not in itself indicative of mass migration, but rather cross-cultural contact stemming from the need to communicate on a broad scale for trade, socialisation, politics and the exchange of ideas – a lingua franca in the same manner that French was the diplomatic language of Europe from the 17th to 19th centuries.

This interpretation can also be applied to exchange networks within Atlantic Europe who would have required a means of (initially) basic communication which developed into what is called the Celtic language today. This lends credence to the theory that inter-relationships and a degree of resettlement may have occurred before recollections or oral descriptions of events were recorded in the sixth century. This suggests that Goidelic speaking 'converts' did so willingly without trying to covertly preserve an ancestral tongue, perhaps related to the little known Pictish language (Laing 1993; 18-21). If there was an invasion or rapid cultural conversion, the archaeological record remains profoundly reluctant to divulge any evidence (Campbell 2001, 287; Cavers 2006, 258; Laing 1993: 31). What does this imply if there was not a wholesale invasion? Campbell puts forth the most logical argument that Goidelic was in use in both Ireland and Western Scotland which remained unaffected by Brittonic speaking inhabitants across the *Druim Albin,* or Grampian Highlands, who were geographically cut off from the day to day transactions of those living near the Irish Sea (2001: 289-90). Indeed, the notion of a common tongue existing between Ireland and Argyll, developing in relative isolation during the Iron Age, provides the most rational argument thus far when compared to the concept of a large scale invasion. The persistence of historians, linguists and archaeologists to accept at face value perpetuations of theories based upon paradigms held

***Figure 4.14** Planview of Loch Glashan (after Scott 1960).*

up by one another is largely responsible for bogging down the issue (*ibid*: 291). The historian Richard Sharpe notes somewhat apologetically:

> *I make no claim to knowing, never mind understanding, the archaeological evidence for the centuries before St. Coloumba. Impressionistically, I may say that the settlement archaeology of Northern Ireland and Argyll appears rather different. The raths and fields of Ireland are not found in Argyll, but that does not mean that the people of Dalriada were not Irish (2000: 50).*

In regards to journeys from Ireland and *vice versa*, accessibility from the north coast of Ireland to the Mull of Kintyre or Iona would have been be relatively straightforward as currents in the North Channel of the Irish Sea flow predictably south before high tide in

Dublin, and northwards after the high water mark (Waddell 1992, 30-31). After a 20km open sea crossing to Kintyre from Antrim (fig. 4.18), a ship would sail north along the coast until it reached Loch Crinan, a journey of approximately 80 km in total. This is bearing in mind that the journey is entirely subjective to the tidal regime, which in the spring can produce currents of up to five knots. If one adds 50% to this distance to account for tacking and jibing[6], a sailboat travelling at 4-5knots (7-8.8km/hr) from Antrim could make the journey as far as Dunadd in less than 15 hours in favourable conditions.

4.4.2 A DálRiatic Crannog in Argyll? Loch Glashan

During the mid-first millennium AD, Scottish crannog construction or occupation appears to have regained momentum roughly concurrent with the postulated Dál Riadic migration into Western Scotland from Antrim. However, crannogs clearly existed in Argyll before this period and a visible change in material culture indicative of a mass migration is notoriously absent despite both areas having similar languages. Any connection between Dál Riata and the spate of crannog reoccupation in Scotland currently remains tenuous. However, the concept of cultural continuity between Antrim and Argyll based upon seafaring, proximity and language suggests a collective sense of identity originating long before the Early Historic period.

One of the key sites in this chapter is the Early Historic crannog at Loch Glashan (NR99 SW1), some 8 km from Dunadd (figs. 4.11 & 4.17). Loch Glashan was revealed in 1960 when the water level was lowered for a hydro-electric scheme. Rescue excavation by J. G. Scott on the partially exposed site initially revealed a crude causeway and fragments of rotary querns. Scott indicates that the 'sub-floor of a rectangular timber building was identified; the surviving portion of the sub-floor, which consisted of massive timbers stripped of their bark and roughly trimmed to form a level surface, indicates that the overall area of the building was about 7.5 by 4.5 m' (Scott 1960; RCAHMS 1988: 207) This topped a matrix of brushwood, fern and bracken (fig 4.14). Additional investigation of the site took place in June of 2003 to determine the actual dimensions of the crannog mound and also to identify the extent of Scott's excavations. It was also hoped that structural timbers could be sampled for radiocarbon analysis (Henderson *in* Crone & Campbell 2005: 21). However, owing to the

[6]These terms refer to a method of sailing into the wind which requires a 'zig-zag' approach, thus adding considerable distance to the journey, as it is not done in a straight line.

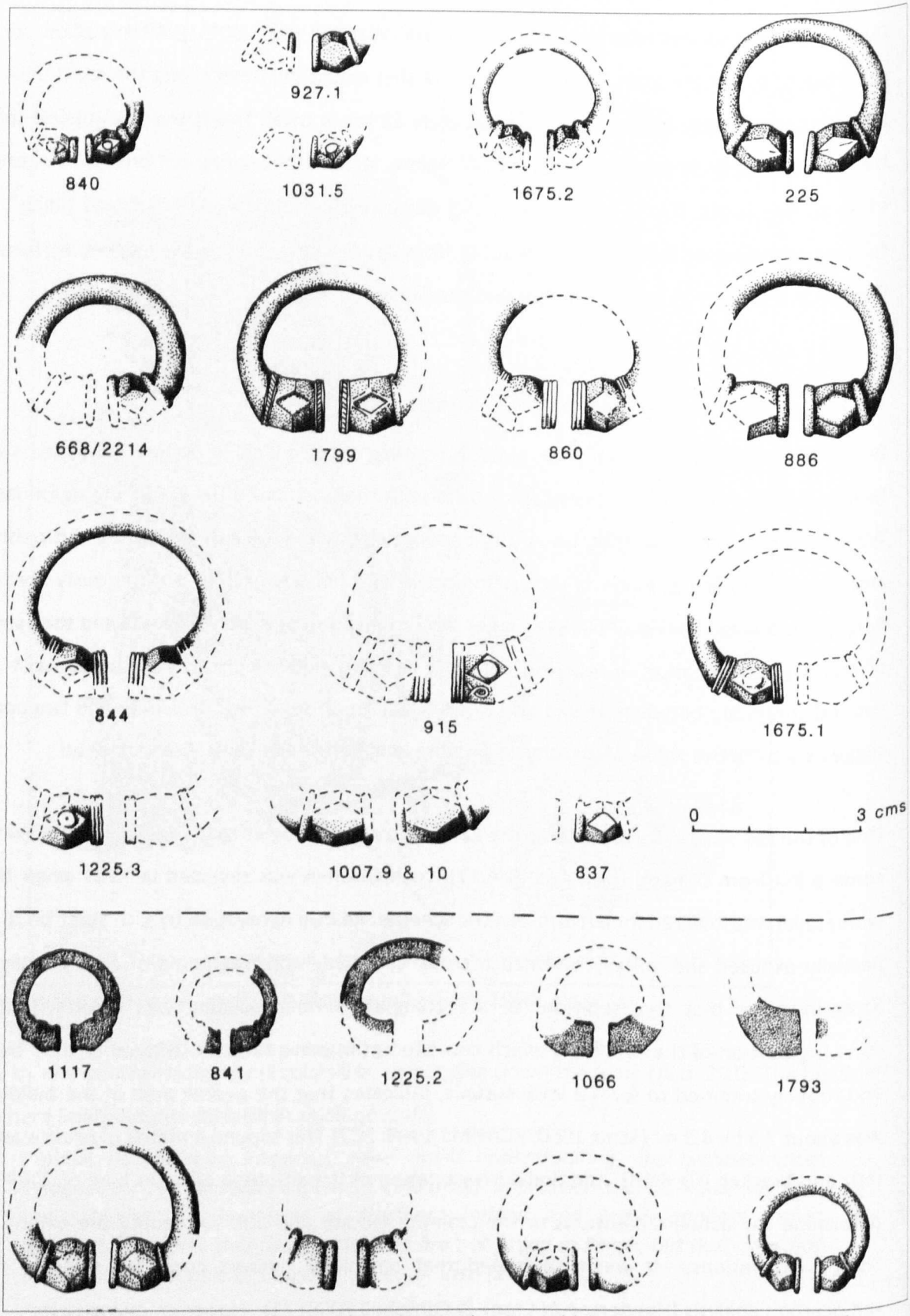


Figure 4.15 *Type G penannular brooches recovered at Dunadd, bottom section is reverse side.*

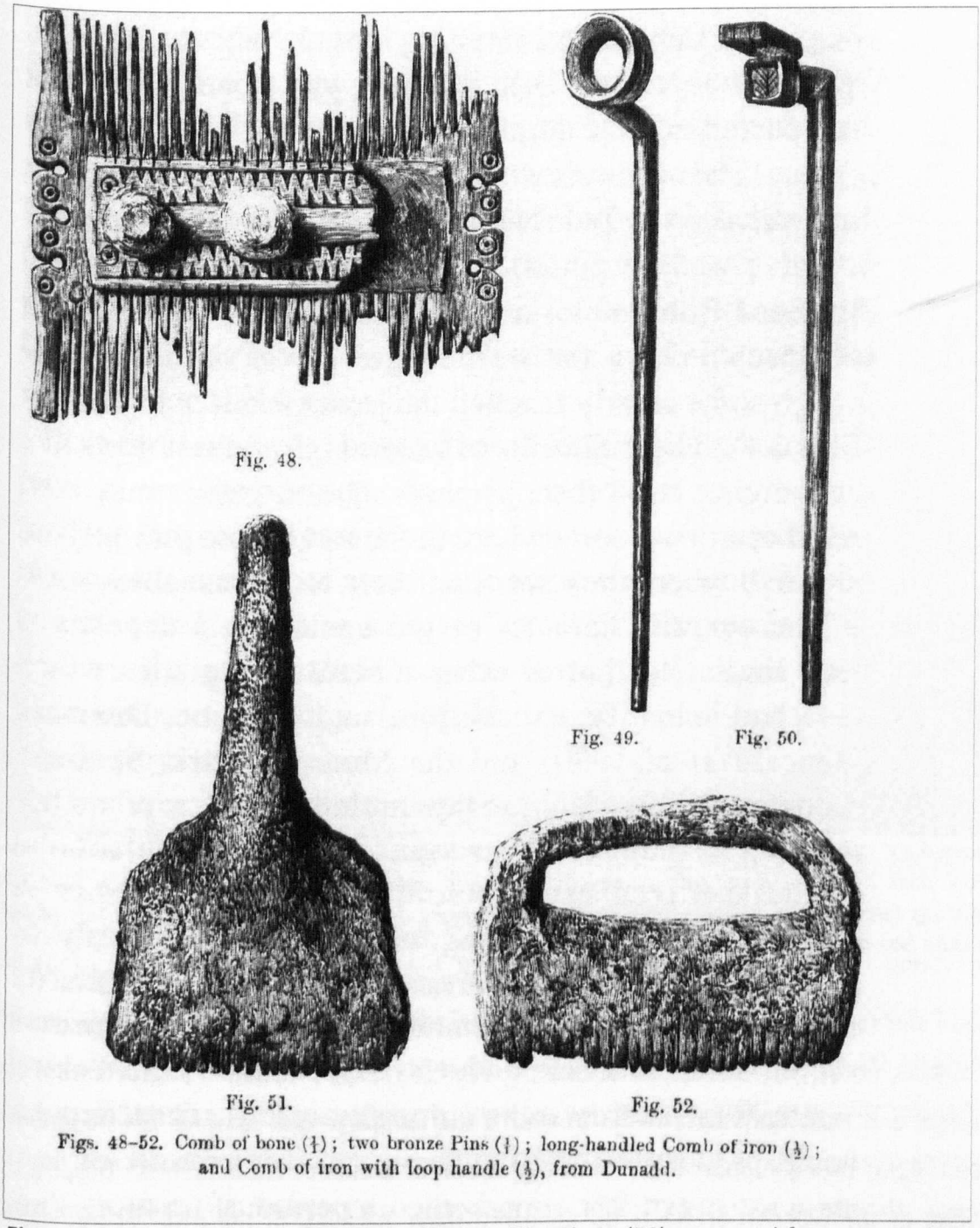


Fig. 48.

Fig. 49.

Fig. 50.

Fig. 51.

Fig. 52.

Figs. 48–52. Comb of bone (½); two bronze Pins (½); long-handled Comb of iron (½); and Comb of iron with loop handle (½), from Dunadd.

Figure 4.16 *Projecting ring-headed pin (49) and hand pin (50) recovered from excavations at Dunadd (Lane & Campbell 2000: 110; Crow 1930; Campbell 1999: 52-7).*

nature of the bottom sediments after the dam was constructed, a hazardous 'ooze layer' of silt accumulated rendering visibility nil making examination highly impractical (*ibid*: 25).

A sizeable assemblage of artefacts datable to the Early Historic period was recovered from the 1960 investigation, including numerous wooden objects preserved in the waterlogged environment. Finds included a paddle, pegs, pins, a bucket, a scoop, bowls, five troughs and a

Figure 4.17 *Strategic location of Loch Glashan and Dunadd on the Mull of Kintyre. Dunadd sits in a low pass near the River Add while Loch Glashan overlooks Loch Fyne. The Loch Awe sites including Ederline are faintly visible in the upper right distance. Loch Loran to the left of Loch Glashan has never been investigated.*

spoon and spindle whorl, which were analysed by Caroline Earwood who, given the quantity of objects, notes: 'One striking difference between the range of wooden artefacts from Loch Glashan and Early Christian sites in Ireland is the complete lack of stave built containers' (1990: 92-3) taking support away from the notion of a direct Irish influence. Despite this, several of the wooden artefacts do appear to have parallels in the Irish record, namely spatulas of 'unknown function' resembling examples from Ballinderry 2, Co. Westmeath, and Lagore, Co. Meath (Earwood 1990:86-7; Hencken 1942: fig 26; Hencken 1950: fig 87). Earwood also notes similarities in socketed handles between Loch Glashan and Ballinderry 2 which were likely used in wood and leatherworking given the assemblages recovered (1990: 91; Hencken 1942: fig. 26).

An object of particular importance is a fragment of a turned wooded vessel that closely resembles an E-ware vessel from the site, an indicator of 'a conscious desire on the part of

the wood turner to emulate the form of a higher value vessel of another medium' (1990: 86). Being able to emulate 'status items' or imported goods in this manner underscores the ability to produce skeuomorphs or wooden copies while highlighting the avoidance of pottery manufacture, either through a conscious decision or a lack of ability. The former is suggested here as it is unlikely that the occupants lacked the ability to make pottery; wooden vessels are durable and not as easily broken perhaps as many ceramics. In a watery context, wooden vessels also would remain buoyant and perhaps easier to make as no kiln or firing process is required – although the presence of hearths on many crannogs indicates that fire on islets was not taboo. In light of the relatively little work that has been carried out on wooden artefacts, Earwood's work plays a vital role in highlighting similarities in the material record between sites in Ireland and Argyll that otherwise would be overlooked. Although it is initially compelling to draw solid conclusions, Earwood cautions: 'The significance of typological similarities between vessels and tools from Loch Glashan and contemporary sites in Ireland are harder to assess. They may be indicative of a cultural exchange of ideas and techniques if not of people and goods' (1990:92). Buiston Crannog in Ayrshire contains similarities in the assemblage to Glashan, with some 48 wooden objects ranging from turned bowls, pegs, spatulas, an ard, a paddle, and a shoe last (Crone 2000: 255-263). Again, E-ware, a possible samian sherd[7], and crucibles for metalworking were found, yet no moulds for jewellery manufacture, except for an ingot mould, or 'strike-a-light', were recovered (*ibid*: 156,165). Additional objects recovered from Loch Glashan include leather goods and remnants, rarely found intact on terrestrial sites. Shoe fragments and what is interpreted as a book satchel (Lewis *in* Crone & Campbell 2005:81-85), as well as some 90 additional fragments of leather, point to the largely industrial nature of the site, especially taking into account the wooden objects. This presents a similar scenario to Buiston, where some 66 fragments were found, mostly shoe-related (Crone 2000: 128-9). The penannular moulds found in number at Dunadd are absent at both Loch Glashan and Buiston. Crucibles containing traces of precious metals such as silver at Loch Glashan (Crone & Campbell 2005:138), and gold and copper at Buiston (Munro 1882: 231, 236; Crone 2000: 156), indicate industrial metalworking activity of high status objects. Evidence of precious metals, however slight, are often used to define a site as one of high status, yet those who manufactured the objects were not necessarily of any important social standing beyond that

[7]The sherd itself is only listed as being 5mm in thickness and no drawing or photo was in the excavation report. The possibility of it being a later red slip-ware is present (Mark Pearce, pers. comm.)

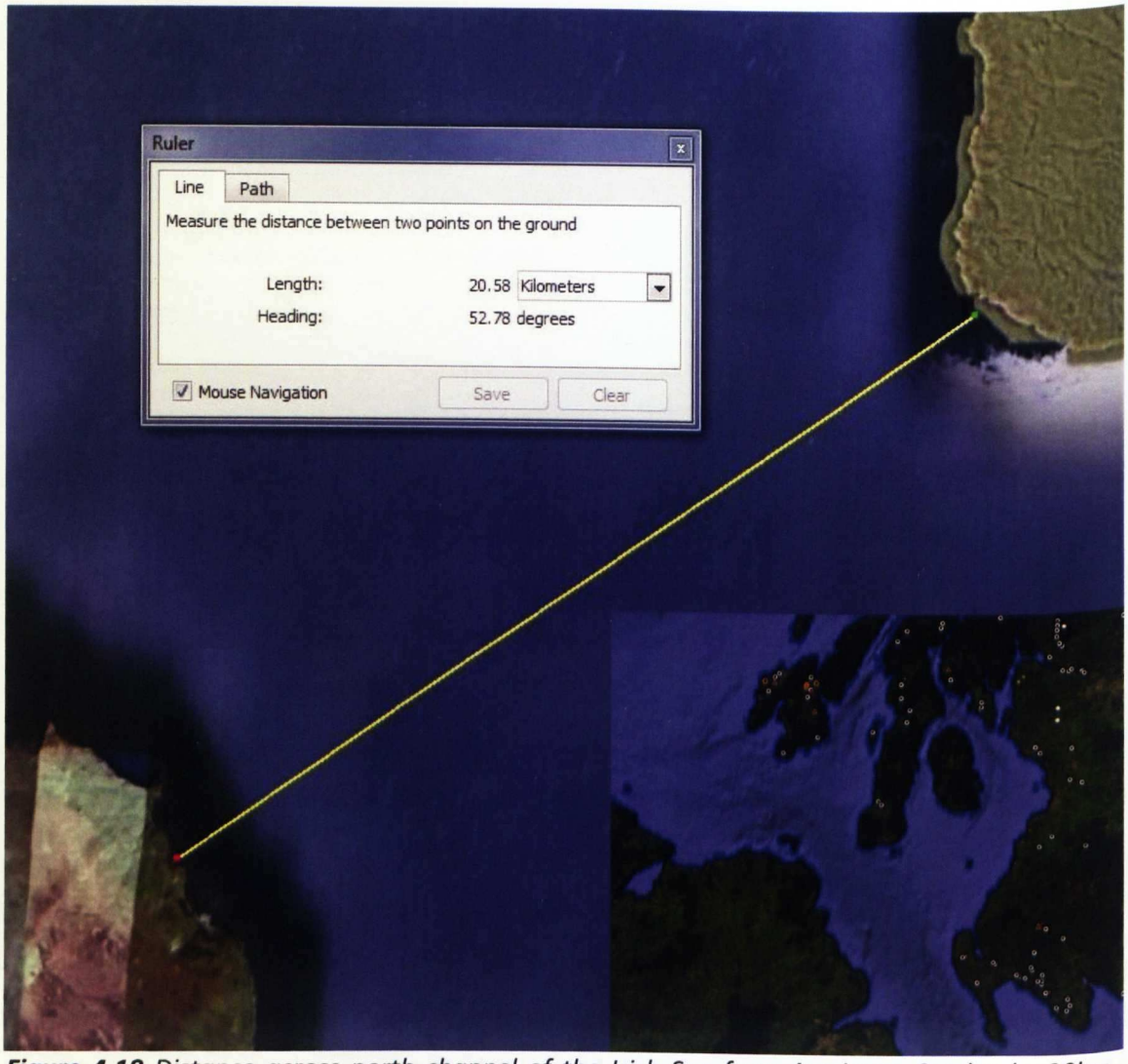


Figure 4.18 *Distance across north channel of the Irish Sea from Antrim to Scotland - 20km. Intervisibility is excellent on clear days.*

of a skilled labourer. It is of note that a penannular brooch of Irish and Pictish influence dating to the 8th or early 9th century was found; this brooch has very close parallels with the brooch found at the seaside dun of Kildonan, Argyll (Fairhurst 1938: 224) which is directly linked via sea routes to the river Add and therefore Dunadd – again indicative of a level of direct contact. While the Loch Glashan brooch could suggest that 'the occupants of Glashan crannog were not of lower class' (Cavers 2006:301), it can be argued that this is perhaps somewhat speculative based upon a single find of copper alloy, not gold or silver, as larger and more elaborate Irish and Scottish brooches exhibit. However, the proximity of Loch Glashan to Dunadd (7km), in conjunction with the Early Historic assemblage, does suggest that the Loch Glashan crannog was an important site for production whose occupation overlapped with that of Dunadd. That the two sites were *not* connected during occupation is

difficult to imagine, as is any notion that goods produced at Loch Glashan did not see use at Dunadd or *vice versa*. What exact function Loch Glashan served in relation to Dunadd is still of some debate (Cavers 2006: 303) although I would suggest the occupants were on a subservient level to those at Dunadd based upon the industrial or manufacturing nature of the site. It would appear Loch Glashan served multiple roles as a local workshop, outpost and perhaps refuge despite the normally conspicuous nature of crannogs in the landscape.

Strategically, Loch Glashan faces the massive Loch Fyne on the eastern side of the Mull of Kintyre (fig. 4.17). Dunadd oversees the west coast, with sheltered passage between Islay, Jura and Scarba to Loch Lynn and ultimately the Great Glen. It is by any standard a complex geography of large sea-lochs, peninsulas; foreigner mariners would likely have sailed the inshore route. In this sense, a reference in the Irish Annals indicates that *Etarlindu,* believed to be Ederline Boathouse, was the site of a pitched battle between the Picts and the Scotti in 736 AD (Lane & Campbell 2000: 25) and so it is quite possible that Loch Glashan served as a defended settlement in a similar capacity. The idea that Glashan 'has even been considered a secondary residence of the Dalriadic kings' (Cavers 2006: 302; Lane & Campbell 2000: 256) is questionable due to the small size of the site, 18m in diameter (Crone & Campbell 2005:124), and the industrial nature of the assemblage, yet the typological data squarely places it within the contemporary context of the Early Historic period. However, the date of construction for the crannog predates this horizon by several centuries, indicating a 2nd to 3rd century AD date for structural timbers (GU-11525, 130-250 cal. AD and GU-11522, 130-330 cal. AD). Cavers states: 'while the very different deposition and preservation biases are often acknowledged, interpretation is nonetheless skewed by them' (2006: 303). Despite evidence for multi-period occupation and varying function, it is certainly conceivable that it would have been visited by persons of higher status for administrative purposes but perhaps little more. Based upon the amount of industry that took place, Loch Glashan was likely a noisy, bustling workshop full of pungent odours from the tanning processes rather than a residence of status; it is somewhat difficult to picture it as a desirable place to dwell except perhaps in emergencies. At Buiston, Crone concedes of the leatherworking: 'The process would have left little evidence in the archaeological record and it is possible that the tanning pits would have been located away from the settlement, perhaps on shore, because of the smell' (Crone 2000: 156). Rather than having onshore tanning pits, crannogs are well suited for leatherworking out of reach of

animals while the watery location would make an ideal spot, not only for the washing of hides away from settlement, but also for waste disposal and fish weirs baited with slaughtering detritus.

4.5 Terrestrial sites of possible DálRiatic influence

4.5.1 Dunadd: A central and strategic location in the Irish Sea Zone

Dunadd (figs. 4.11, 4.12 & 4.17), situated on the River Add between Knapdale and Mid-Argyll, is commonly accepted to be the seat or 'capital' of Dál Riata in Scotland (Christison, 1905; Craw, 1930; Bannerman 1974, 112-13; Lane & Campbell, 2000; Campbell 2001). Dunadd is important not only because it provides the strongest archaeological evidence of an Early Historic Royal centre linked to Dál Riata in Argyll, but also because it is mentioned in the Irish *Annals of Tigernach* during the seventh and eighth centuries, and again in the early 16th century (Lane & Campbell: 2000). This indicates that Dunadd was a site of considerable political and social influence over at least two centuries. After this entry, Dunadd was largely forgotten until the 19th century when historian W.F. Skene showed renewed interest in the site. Geographically, the location provides a natural hilltop defence, and seafarers would have sailed up the meandering River Add via Loch Crinan in a largely open landscape, providing ample notice of any arriving visitors. Crinan Bay, in turn, empties into the Sound of Jura, therefore larger seagoing craft would not be able to navigate the upper reaches of river near the fort. This would indicate that trade or contact likely took place along Crinan Bay away from the main settlement.

4.5.2 The excavation and finds from Dunadd

Three excavations have taken place at Dunadd, the first in 1904-5 (Christison, 1905), a second in 1929 (Craw, 1930), and finally in the 1980-81 season led by Alan Lane and the University of Cardiff with the partial support of Historic Scotland (Lane & Campbell, 2000). These excavations revealed several unique aspects of Dunadd, one being the ceramic record, which, at 31 vessels, remains the 'largest collection of imported continental pottery from any British or Irish site, with five different types of ware' primarily composed of E-ware (fig. 4.13) originating from Western France (Ritchie 1997, 52; Lane & Campbell 2000, 98). Another point of interest is the presence of domestic pottery which remains largely unique for both Antrim and Argyll in that both areas are thought to have been aceramic relying upon wood for both domestic and commercial vessels. The imported goods indicate the role Dunadd served as a

centre of commerce in Argyll during the Early Historic period obtaining high status goods from as far away as the Mediterranean, but evidence in the material record regarding contact with Ireland is substantially more inconclusive. Locally, the discovery of Early Historic weaponry such as spearheads (seven to ten); one sword fragment, arrowheads (two), and crossbow bolts (two) may not initially appear to be an exceptionally large find. However, this assemblage is only surpassed by the royal crannog site at Lagore, Ireland (Hencken 1950; Lane & Campbell 2000: 236). Perhaps the most useful material for examining the extent of Dál Riata are the numerous crucibles and moulds recovered for production of both ferrous and nonferrous items of bronze, silver and gold used for personal jewellery, fittings for decorated bowls and domestic objects. Given the uniqueness of individual moulds, items such as brooches should be easily traceable although Campbell notes surprisingly little if any research has been done to analyse artefacts between Ireland and Argyll with the possible exception of high status jewellery (2001: 287). The type G3 penannular brooch (fig 4.15), 15 of which were found at Dunadd, is one of the few status items that can be readily traced to both Ireland and Argyll (*ibid*: 287). However, to confuse the matter, G3 brooches and production sites in Britain predate their Irish counterparts by approximately a century based upon dendrochronological and typological evidence indicating a British-Hiberno flow of goods counter to a concept of Irish immigrants bringing with them native influences (Lane & Campbell 2000: 76; Campbell 2001: 287). Other moulds for personal goods stemming from Dunadd such as the projecting ring-headed pin, the 'F3' penannular brooch mould, and a 'hand pinmould (Fig 4.16) do have parallels in the Early Medieval Irish record but only the F3 mould is considered as possibly having an Irish influence; the hand pin moulds are known only from North Uist, Shetland and Orkney, again reinforcing the notion of a British-Hiberno flow of influence (Lane & Campbell: 240).

Additional finds from Dunadd include panelled brooch moulds that are classified as ornate penannular and pseudo-penannular types (*ibid*: 238). These are well known in Ireland and the Pictish territory of Eastern Scotland across the *Druim Albin*, yet this does not provide a source of inspiration or influence for this style of brooch. According to the *Annals of Ulster*, a successful siege of Dunadd by the Pictish overking Oengus occurred in 736AD providing a confusing but possible source for this type of penannular mould via warfare or trade (Bannerman 1974, 16; Ritchie 1997, 50; Lane & Campbell 2000:253). Associations such as this are highly speculative, and may remain so, but currently they cannot be ruled out. A spiral

headed ring-pin from Dunadd is perhaps the only artefact that can reliably be associated with Ireland. Approximately 40 examples are known from Ireland (Lane & Campbell 2000: 240), yet the find from Dunadd stands as the only example in Argyll thus far, and can only be considered indicative of 'casual' contact through perhaps a chance encounter or random event and nothing more.

Therefore what may initially appear as a straightforward historical narrative corroborated from multiple sources which documents the arrival of Dál Riata in Argyll becomes an increasingly complex, subjective discussion. The historical references cannot be confidently relied upon when considering not only the archaeological information from Dunadd but also the political nature of writings that were re-copied centuries after the incidents they describe. However, based upon the weaponry recovered from both Dunadd and Lagore, that relations across the Irish Sea were not always quiet affairs despite sometimes imperceptible differences in material culture and language; entries into the annals mention raids from Argyll *into* Ireland which occurred in 622, 629 and 637 AD. In fact, Bannerman (1974: 172) references no less than ten different *cenéls* or tribes existing in Argyll who formed various allegiances with one another creating a complex political identity; however this degree of insight is not readily apparent in the existing archaeological record, and should only be taken at face value. Such are the hazards involved in studies dealing with the boundary between prehistoric and historic, especially when many of the 'contemporary' accounts such as the *Annals of Tigernach* are in fact copies that appear several centuries later, often suspect of serving as political propaganda to establish inheritance rights to an early united Scottish throne (Campbell 2001:288). Although it may be relatively indisputable to say that Dunadd served as a centre of great importance for trade and commerce in Early Historic Argyll, one must look at the larger settlement record while considering the archaeological work on nearby sites in order to tease out additional information after the historic references are fully considered.

4.5.3 Dunollie

A discussion of Dunadd's situation within DálRiata ideally needs to discuss the parallel importance of Dunollie, a citadel located on a promontory above Oban Bay approximately 40km north of Dunadd. Dunollie is believed to have served as a seat for the local *Cenél Loairn* who occupied much of Argyll during the latter half of the 1st Millennium AD (Alcock & Alcock

1987:120; Heywood 2001: 92-3). Dunollie is referred to in the Iona Annals no less than five times between 686AD and 734AD, more so than Dunadd itself (Alcock & Alcock 1987: 127; Bannerman 1974), indicating that it also served a strategic and economic role to rival that of Dunadd. There is some discussion as to whether or not Dunollie was in fact the primary seat of Dál Riata in Argyll; outwardly it shares much in common with Dunadd based upon physical dimensions and a visible location in the landscape:

> *At Dunadd the usable area was about 2500m² while at Dunollie it was about 1850m² or about 74% of the area at Dunadd. This difference does not seem large enough to mark a difference in status: in terms of area alone, it would be difficult to assert that Dunadd was the principal stronghold, rather than a principal stronghold (Alcock & Alcock 1987: 130).*

To date, excavations have been limited to approximately 20m² or roughly 2% of the total site, which were undertaken in 1978, led by Leslie Alcock with the University of Glasgow. This work delineated five phases of construction dating from the seventh to the thirteenth century with a lapse sometime after the tenth century of unknown duration (Alcock & Alcock 1987). Similarities to Dunadd in the assemblages, such as continental E-ware and weaponry, indicate that Dunollie was part of the same trade network as Dunadd. In fact, findspots for E-ware in Cornwall, South Wales, Ireland and Western Scotland appear almost continuously along both sides the Irish Sea, from the Isles of Scilly in the extreme south to Dunollie in the north, with an additional 33 discoveries in Ireland primarily concentrated in Co. Cork and the northeast from Lagore to *Ulaid* or roughly modern day Antrim (fig. 4.13).

There is also evidence of pottery production which produced vessels that were aesthetically crude but in description sound quite similar to the B4 'very course rock tempered ware' from Dunadd that 'is ideally suited to withstand repeated stresses of heating and cooling' (Lane & Campbell 2000: 105). Other artefacts from Dunollie include a diagnostic rim shard from a Roman glass bowl from the third century AD and a cobalt blue glass bead which 'has good parallels on both forts and crannogs of the later first millennium AD in Ireland' (Alcock & Alcock 1987: 142). Ultimately, the question of which site was 'more important' is largely irrelevant as it remains certain both Dunadd and Dunollie served key roles in solidifying the position of Dál Riata in Argyll, recovering after sieges from both the momentarily victorious Picts in the eighth century under Oengus, and later interference from Viking raids in Argyll, primarily at Iona, from 794AD until 825AD.

4.5.4 Dún an Fheurain, Gallanach, Oban

Another site that has been tentatively linked to Dál Riata (Alcock & Alcock 1987:137) is Dún an Fheurain, approximately 5km from Oban bay and Dunollie. The site sits upon a naturally defended sea-stack with limited access overlooking the Sound of Kerrera. Two excavations took place during the 1890s but unfortunately were never fully published (Anderson 1895; Christison 1889; Ritchie 1971:100). The interior of the Dun remained unexcavated; the primary focus was on a midden discovered at the base on the west side. Finds from Dún an Fheurain include a projecting ring-headed pin similar to the pin from Dunadd, a spiral ring, and a samian sherd. The artefacts were generally lumped into two groups comprising those prior to 200 AD, and those from the mid first millennium AD onwards. The projecting ring-headed pin and spiral ring belong to the latter (*ibid*: 102).

In light of the excavations from Dunadd and Dunollie, it is worth reconsidering the dates for these items that appear to be in association to with the Roman pottery, which in the absence of stratigraphical information, reveals little overall and is potentially misleading. The artefacts ascribed to the later assemblage include a globular-headed bone pin, a bone pottery stamp, and part of a bone comb (Anderson 1895: 280-81). The inferred absence of occupation from roughly the third to the fifth century AD cannot be commented upon with any reliability while the chronology of dun construction is generally regarded as a later prehistoric development, i.e. mid-first millennium BC. Armit goes on to extend occupation of duns to the eighth century AD prior to Nordic invasions and settlement (1990:47). Given the location of Dún an Fheurain in the heart of Dál Riata, is it difficult to imagine that it was abandoned to a large extent during much of the mid first millennium AD. No indication as to the percentage of excavation is mentioned in Ritchie's examination of the assemblage from this site as it was reviewed primarily for inventory purposes. However, Anderson does mention some 800 cartloads of earth being removed from the midden indicating that little data probably remains (1895: 278). Future work *within* the dun would serve to clarify the relationship of the site in relation to settlement in Argyll and Western Britain. Regarding all three sites above, access to water is an underlying factor when discussing Dál Riata:

> *The importance of seaways is also critical to trade and other external linkages during the first millennium, and significant for the location of many of the major settlement centres' (Ralston & Armit 1997: 221).*

4.5.5 Closing thoughts on Dalriatic Sites

Despite the commonalities of language and associated links within the wider historical narrative discussed above, assemblages thus far have shown a limited but nevertheless visible similarity between material culture in Argyll and Antrim, with the exception of E-ware, which as a foreign import. This perhaps indicates nothing more than a taste for similar luxuries. It is important here to note the distribution of E-ware in the British Isles, especially the Irish Sea zone. E-ware seems almost equally distributed in both Ireland and Scotland, with Whithorn and the Mote of Mark having unusually high concentrations. The clusters of sites in northern Ireland and south west Scotland indicates Continental seafarers stopped in both areas as a normal trade routine, or perhaps was then imported into a particular area, from which point it was passed on as a form of exchange or tribute. Conversely, the inhabitants of DálRiata, or those under their influence in the surrounding regions, could have certainly gone to the Continent themselves specifically to acquire sought-after items given the maritime nature of Argyll. The western distribution of E-ware either indicates this possibility, or that inhabitants of eastern Scotland could or would not use these goods. It is again notable that E-ware is not seen from Cumbria southwards until reaching the Severn, indicating a lack of trade or economic contact between these areas, which also happen to show a marked degree of contrast in settlement styles. Overall, it is ultimately the settlement forms, namely crannogs, which provide the strongest evidence of continuity between Atlantic Scotland and Ireland in the Early Historic Period. However, at the end of the 8th century there was a new and powerful influence on the horizon, as incomers from Scandinavia arrived in number. The Viking impact appears to be a powerful one in regards to disruption of the island dwelling tradition in Western Scotland.

4.6 The Norse and Medieval Period in Mainland Argyll

4.6.1 The Norse Hiatus

The evidence for crannog use in Argyll witnesses a sharp decline after the height of Dál Riata, with the last pre-Norse dates stemming from the typological evidence at Loch Glashan in the form of the 8th or 9th century brooch, a glass bead and a group of ambiguous stones, considered to be gaming counters (Crone & Campbell 2005: 113). This suggests a measurable Norse impact upon the settlement record of Argyll whereby island dwelling use fell out of

Figure 4.19 *Medieval sites on mainland Argyll mentioned in text.*

favour during or just prior to the arrival of Vikings. Based upon the current evidence, it is clear the popularity of crannogs went into sharp decline, if not abandonment, at nearly the same time Viking raids on Ireland and Scotland began.

Therefore no reliable data currently exists for islet use in Argyll from the 9th to at least the 12th century AD; the Norse-inspired brooch from Loch Glashan remains unique in this context. It is counter-intuitive that island dwelling use appears to cease completely; the easily defensible nature of crannogs would make an attractive refuge, particularly during periods of coastal raiding. This may well underscore the defensive shortcomings of islets, especially against expert seamen who were already at home on water. It is also possible that the coastal population of Argyll was duly affected or subjugated to the extent that laborious building initiatives were culled in the same manner as Magnus Barelegs controlled timber resources in the south west (*see* 3.6.4 above). Yet this fails to explain the use of existing sites, of which there would have been a large number in Argyll. The 'heartlands' of Argyll, i.e. Lorn and Mid-Argyll, seems to have deflected the brunt of Viking intrusions as Norse place name evidence and graves are entirely absent from this area (Graham-Campbell *et al* 1998: 84).

What conclusion can be drawn from this remains elusive. If the Norse did not gain overall control in central Argyll, perhaps their effect was one of consolidation, repositioning the population away from the lochs. However, in the same manner as Lochrutton and Loch Arthur in the south west, islet reuse and construction appears almost simultaneously in the 12th century.

4.6.2 *A Medieval re-emergence of the island dwelling tradition*

With the exception of the Western Isles, Argyll has one of the strongest regional Medieval and Post-Medieval legacies of crannog use. Emerging from the Norse hiatus, the Medieval period witnesses a return to the lochs as shown by upstanding remains, radiocarbon evidence, oral traditions and historical references, especially in charters declaring ownership of a particular island . The mention of island dwellings in charters specifically points to a degree of importance and status not as self-evident in the previous millennia, despite Early Historic sites witnessing substantial changes in their material assemblages. No less than 16 sites have demonstrated Medieval or later use in mainland Argyll and the Inner Hebrides through datable artefacts or historical records, while numerous others suggest use during this period through the remains of rectilinear or angular buildings. Elan-Rossdhu (NS38 NE3) in Loch Lomond (fig. 4.19) is first mentioned in the *Lairds of Luss* charters and was in use *prior* to 1220 AD while the last mention was made in the 1602AD *Charters of Barony* (Fraser 1869: 143; FIRAT 1996: 15). Elan-Rossdhu is located some 30-35m from the modern shoreline with a basal diameter of 38m and a usable area of c.572m^2 or 27m in diameter. The remains of heavily disturbed drystone foundations were visible during the 1996 survey though no discernible 'castle' as such was clear from the report, likely due to substantial alteration of the site in later years. The mention of this site as being occupied prior to 1220AD gives a *terminus ante quem* for Medieval use though as with all crannogs, construction is likely much earlier.

This places Elan-Rossdhu at the earlier end of this period while Lock Eck (NS19 SW3) 20km west in Cowal, also provided a date of 1150-1300 cal. AD (GU-11923) from a structural timber as part of the SWCS (Cavers 2005). The basal area is some 1150m while the usable area falls somewhere around >400m^2. Profiles of the island indicate that even slight reductions in loch level would quickly increase this figure. Early Ordnance Survey maps refer to the island as Eilean a' Chocaire, or possibly 'Island of the Cooks' while it was known locally as 'Farm Island',

Figure 4.20 *Sites in Kintyre and Knapdale mentioned in text.*

a potentially telling indicator of past importance as noted by Rennie (1995). Oral tradition also holds that Robert the Bruce (b.1274-d.1329) was entertained there - a common name who plays in several local crannog traditions. While these casual references on their own cannot be considered other than interesting folklore, the radiocarbon date certainly indicates the site was built or modified approximately during this period. Likewise, given the existence of at least three oral traditions of Robert I of Scotland visiting crannogs, it is probable that he did set foot upon one, which alludes to the apparent status of the hosts and the nature of crannogs as places to entertain (i.e. feast) during the Medieval Period. Additionally, a late 13th century charter from nearby Islay bears his signature, while documents from Kintyre, Arran and the Bishop of Argyll mention his presence indicating that he spent an appreciable amount of time in maritime Argyll before his death in 1329 (Barrow 1965).

The initial prehistoric use of Loch Leathan (NR89 NE11), in Mid-Argyll, indicated by a radiocarbon determination of 2560±50 BP (GU-11920) from a structural pile, clearly indicate

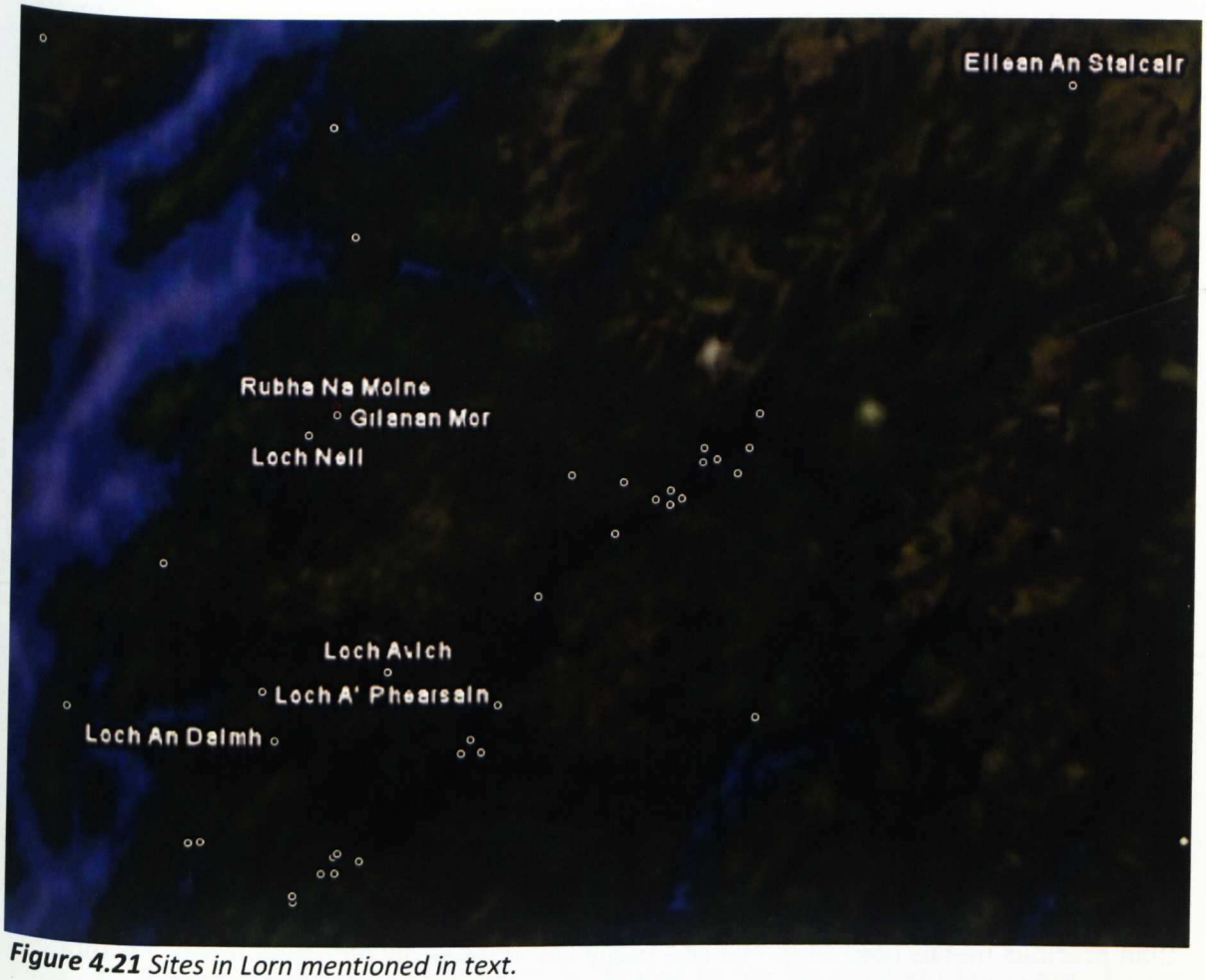


Figure 4.21 *Sites in Lorn mentioned in text.*

LBA/EIA origins. However, Medieval re-use is indicated by finds of 13th or 14th century green-glazed pottery and building foundations of cellular structures overlain by more recent works that appear to have been substantially robbed. Oral tradition has it that a 'castle' stood on the island at late as c.1650AD yet this could not be corroborated in charters of the period (Campbell 1885). Despite this, the presence of ceramic and later foundations testifies to the continued use of the site. If not a residence for the laird, it was at least occupied by someone of importance to the local land and economy. Loch Leathan crannog has a basal diameter of c.22m and a 'dry' diameter of 15m^2 (Cavers 2003: 26) yet was reported as being only 6-7m in diameter when recorded in an OS survey of 1970. If so, this indicates a fair amount of loch level fluctuation until re-examined by Cavers between 2002 and 2003.

The loch measuring roughly 700m by 200m, and likely has been subject to silting and encroachment of blanket peats since abandonment of the crannog. A consideration of historic loch levels must take into account the possibility that outlets were modified or

maintained carefully (cf Carlingwark Loch, Ch. 3) to ensure that sites did not flood during the winter or spring months, especially on sites which demonstrate substantial building evidence and were likely inhabited year-round. Indeed, accounts exist of English troops blocking loch outlets in Ireland in order to flood besieged defenders in the 17th century (O'Sullivan 1998: 34), certainly an effective means of demoralising the occupants in smaller lochs. The span of use witnessed at Loch Leathan is also testimony to the continued importance of the crannog over some two millennia; despite uncertainties regarding the continuity, people made the decision to remain on islands that likely had a sense of former importance attached to them, carried on in the strong oral traditions which persist today.

4.6.3 Medieval and later sites in Kintyre and Knapdale

Lochan Dughaill, Kintyre (NR75 NE5), was investigated in the late 19th century by Munro after drainage revealed two crannogs (1893). Finds included lithics, a crucible remarked to be similar to ones found during Munro's excavation at Buiston, and wheel-turned pottery from the 15th or 16th century in the form of an almost complete drinking vessel (Munro 1893:211). The crucible in particular was remarked to have been too small for anything other than precious metals (*ibid* 213). The site today lies in a heavily ploughed forestry plantation; aerial photography indicates a circular cropmark while the second crannog is apparently lost; it was not considered to be a 'good example' by Munro who remarked that it appeared to have perhaps been abandoned before completion or used only briefly. 5.8km northwest of Lochan Dughaill is Loch A' Bhaillidh, Knapdale (NR76 SE 5; fig. 4.20), an islet measuring some 27 x 12m (Campbell & Sandeman 1964: 61) and slightly less in current aerial photos as the loch level was artificially raised by the early 1970s. The remains of a drystone rectilinear structure measuring 11.5 x 6m were recorded on the island along with local tradition of a causeway. This is certainly difficult to envisage despite the artificially raised water levels as the site is now some 125m from the nearest shore. 5km due north is Eilean Tighe (NR76 NE1) in Loch nan Torran which measures some 20 x 16m, forming a sub-circular mound 115m from the west shore of the loch. Clear structural remains of two crudely built rectilinear dwellings give an impression of secondary re-use (ibid: 61). Aerial photos also clearly show a 2x2m boat noost on the NW segment here.

4.6.4 Medieval and later Lorn

Mentioned in several 14th century charters (Smith 1873: 105), Rubha Na Moine (NM82NE 22) is located in Loch Nell, in the northwestern area of Lorn (fig. 4.21). Little indication is given by Smith as to where this site is mentioned specifically, yet the site was granted to the Campbells, who apparently had a residence on this at least partially-artificial island, until their seat was transferred to Lochnell house in the 17th century. While prehistoric origins again cannot be ruled out, the historical evidence indicates at least three centuries of use here. The island, some 43m in diameter (Cavers 2003), is located well over 100m from the modern shoreline and shares the loch with at least one other undated crannog, 'Loch Nell' (NM82 NE23). The third suspected site, Grianan Mor, was mentioned by Blundell but was not located, either via recent underwater inspection or aerial photography. Given Blundell's tendency to note sites from second hand sources and not visit the loch himself, its location remain tenuous, though the two confirmed crannogs support the possibility. As Rubha Na Moine was heavily covered with vegetation, no structural remains were visible though Smith notes the island was not heavily overgrown during his visit, perhaps indicating it had not stood vacant for a lengthy amount of time.

Eilean An Stalcair, Loch Tulla (NE24 SE 1), is located in the far northern boundary of Lorn some 22km NE of Loch Awe. Stuart relays that the site, known in Gaelic as *Elanelochtollyff*, was mentioned in a charter from 1432AD covering the lands of Glenorchy. The island, with the visible portion indicated as measuring some 26 x 20m by Ordnance Survey in 1962, contains a timber laced stone mound but no structural remains are immediately evident (Stuart 1864; RCAHMS 1975: 211). Loch A' Phearsain (NM81 SE 3), is situated 1.6 km inland from the coast of Lorn facing the island of Luing to the west. Three different sources of information attest to the islands use during either the Medieval or Post-Medieval Period. First are the extensive structural foundations for three rectilinear buildings: roughly 11x 7m, 10 x6 and 6x4m (RCAHMS 1975: 240). Second is Pont's map from an undetermined time in the early 17th century which indicated occupation, and thirdly, local traditions holding that a small religious community was driven off by a 'freebooter' or general rogue (in the proper sense) by the name of MacPhearson, hence the Gaelic name of A'Phearsain. While this alone perhaps makes for a good story and little else, the substantial structural remains do indicate a busy site of some local importance while the protected coastal location at the end of the sea fiord certainly allows concealed access to busy sea routes from Kintyre to Mull. 2.5km SE

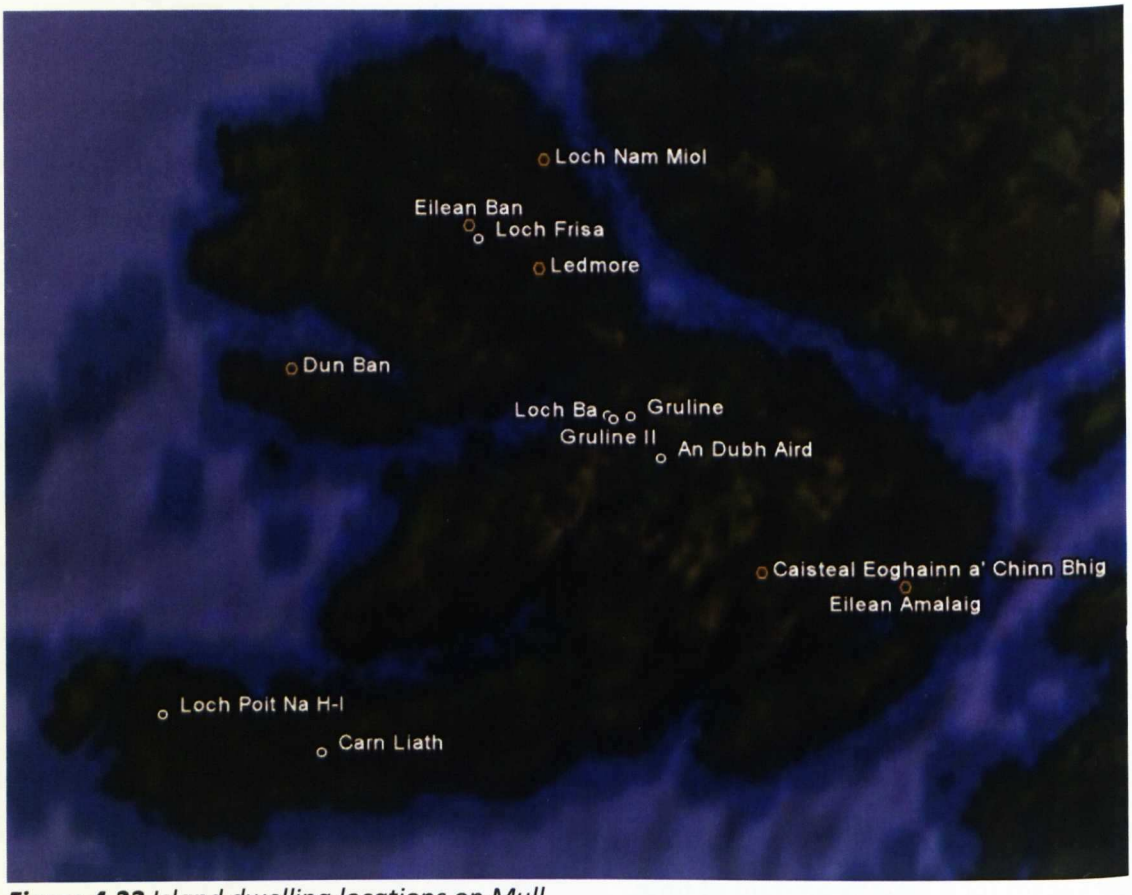


Figure 4.22 *Island dwelling locations on Mull.*

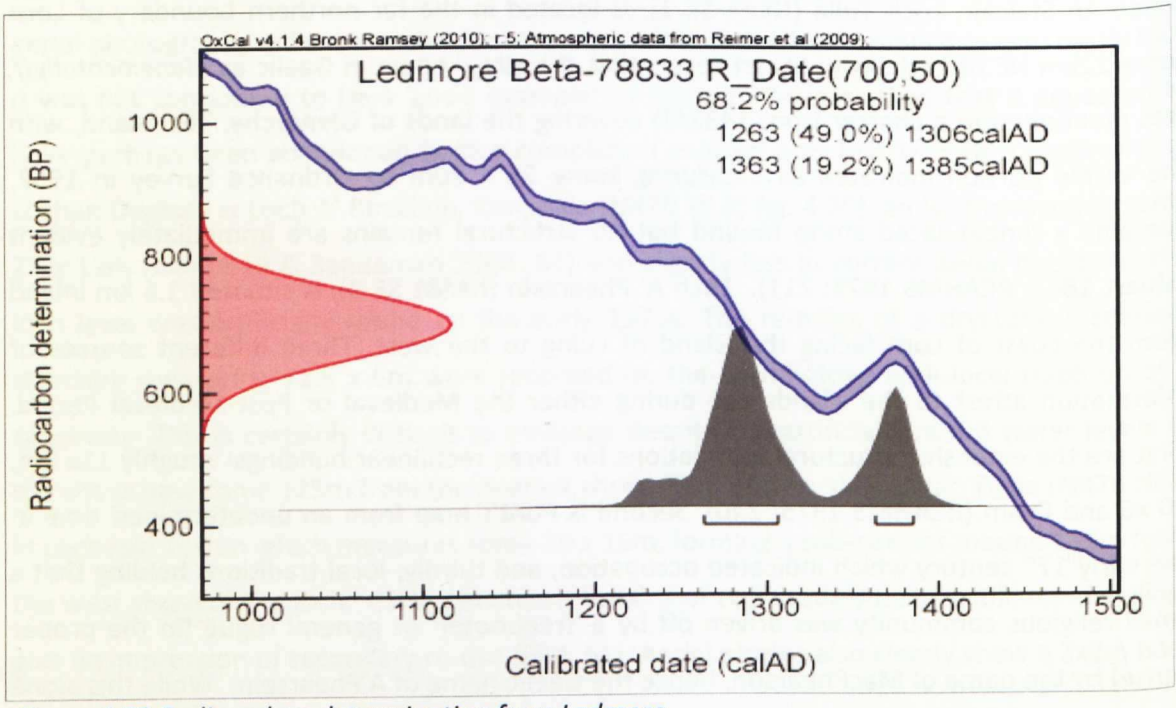


Figure 4.23 *Radiocarbon determination from Ledmore.*

of Loch A' Phearsain is Loch An Daimh (NM81 SE 2) which was shown on the 1875 OS map as having an unroofed structure while two 'oblong' buildings within perimeter walling along the edge of the islet were visible in the early 1960's (Campbell & Sandeman 1962: 61) while 6km east is Loch Avich, discussed above with an Early Iron Age radiocarbon date. Despite this early date, structures on the island seem to be the Medieval or newer as Cavers suggests the possible remains of a West Highland longhouse (2006:398). Additionally, and more chronologically precise than structural remains, are fragments of Medieval green-glazed pottery which date to the 13th or 14th century.

4.7 The Inner Hebrides post-AD 1000

While island dwelling use on mainland Scotland is well attested during the Medieval Period, the Inner Hebridean islands of Mull, Coll, Tiree and Islay contain some 40 examples of artificial islets in addition to a number of occupied natural islets. This high density of sites, many of which indicate later use (i.e. Medieval and beyond) illustrates both the widespread acceptance of island dwellings in a maritime context and a continuity in use until the recent past. In light of the similar physical environment to their Outer Hebridean counterparts (Chapters 5 & 6), the Inner Hebridean sites tend to have substantial stone causeways and robust drystone architecture, though with diminished frequency. Conversely, the limited use of timber, such as at Ledmore on Mull, falls far short of the frequency seen on the mainland. However the availability of timber is much more abundant in comparison to the Outer Hebrides. In a direct sense, Inner Hebridean island dwelling designs reflects both environmental and cultural influences from the mainland and the Western Isles. As such, many appear as 'hybrid' island dwellings. The Inner Hebrides also contain numerous signs of Medieval re-use; a tradition that appears to be widespread based upon examples of rectilinear structural foundations and walling. Despite this, little excavation has taken place in the Inner Hebrides leaving archaeologists to rely upon structural forms and stray finds for the time being. Given the enduring nature of the island dwelling tradition in the neighbouring Western Isles[8] and mainland, it would be surprising if a substantial prehistoric component did not exist here as well.

[8]The Outer Hebrides (the political name) are more commonly known as the Western Isles.

4.7.1 Mull

Caisteal Eoghainn a' Chinn Bhig (NM 631 307), is mentioned in several sources as the castle of a relative of the 5th MacLean of Loch Buy, and was considered a place of 'inhabited strength' in the mid-16th century (Monro 1549; MacLean 1923; Holley 2000: 141). The ovoid island, measuring some 30 by 15m, did not have any substantial structural remains that could be interpreted as a 'castle', yet Holley did record a substantial cellular structure with walling some 1.3-2m in thickness (2000:141). Based upon Monro's accounts and the evidence from the charter however, there is not much doubt it was inhabited by someone of higher status during the Mid- to Late-Medieval Period. Also in Mull, some 20km NW (fig. 4.22), a timber on the featureless crannog of Ledmore (NM54 NW20) in Loch Frisa on Mull, returned a determination of 700BP ±50 calibrating to 1263-1385AD (beta-078833; fig. 4.23). Holley interpreted this as a construction date given that the timber was found projecting from the base of the crannog mound (*ibid* 147). Despite questions of taphonomy that surround site-formation processes for crannogs on the whole (*cf* Cavers 2007; Henderson 2007), this is a secure date for at least one phase of construction in the 13th or 14th century, a date which broadly corresponds with examples of 12th to 14th century occupation from Lochan Dughaill, Loch Leathan and Loch Avich.

Additional examples of later use in Mull include Loch na Miol (NM55 SW2), which contains linear walling indicative of more modern construction along the south east portion of the upper platform (Campbell 1871: 465; RCAHMS 1980: 122 & Holley 2000: 149). A logboat was also retrieved in the late 19th century; Campbell took the laudable initiative to submerged it after inspection yet it was never recovered. Another example of later walling is Eilean Ban, Loch Frisa (NM44 NE1) which locally was known as a prison; surveyors in the 1970s believed the walling to be of late Medieval date based upon the method of drystone construction and plinths (RCAHMS 1980: 120). Holley's 1994 survey of the site revealed several split timbers at the base which he believed to be associated with superstructural remains and not part of the actual island despite the consensus that the drystone atop the site was Medieval, a date of 2200± 70 BP or 370-196 cal. BC (Holley 1994: 57; Holley & Ralston 1995) was returned, indicating use in one form or another on this small island for almost two millennia (fig. 4.17).Eilean Amalaig (NM72 NW1), an intertidal islet measuring roughly 28 x 22m, was not investigated by Holley but was visited by OS surveyors in 1976, who listed it as a 'fortified island' due to what was believed to be late Medieval drystone walling surrounding much of

Figure 4.24 *Coll & Tiree (L) in relation to Mull.*

the site, while rubble obscured the interior (RCAHMS 1980: 120). As the underwater component has not been surveyed, the degree of artificiality is currently unknown; the RCAHMS listing of the site as a 'fortified islet', and not as a crannog alludes to the grey area between current perceptions regarding what is a 'crannog' or a 'fortified islet'. In a similar categorical vein is the intertidal site of Dun Ban, Ulva (NM34 SE1: fig. 4.29)[9]. Occupying a natural islet, it is causewayed, contains a crosswall at the point of entry, and clearly shows a Medieval structure. The site was listed in the New Statistical Account of 1845 as located at Glackingdaline Castle, and was believed to be inhabited by the MacQuarries of Ulva during this period (RCAHMS 1980; Rees 1998:21). The RCAHMS classes this site as an 'island dwelling' which precludes it from searches for crannogs in the database. This site is no different conceptually than a 'traditional' timber crannog, despite having many of the same accoutrements such as causeways and walling to limit and define both the interior and access (*see* 2.1.3, above). Omitting sites such as Dun Ban on these grounds alone inhibits a fundamental discussion of the Scottish island dwelling tradition where such sites are excluded without due merit.

[9]Ulva is a small island measuring some 10x2.5km off the west central coast of Mull; *see* figure 4.22.

Figure 4.25 *Island dwellings on Coll & Tiree.*

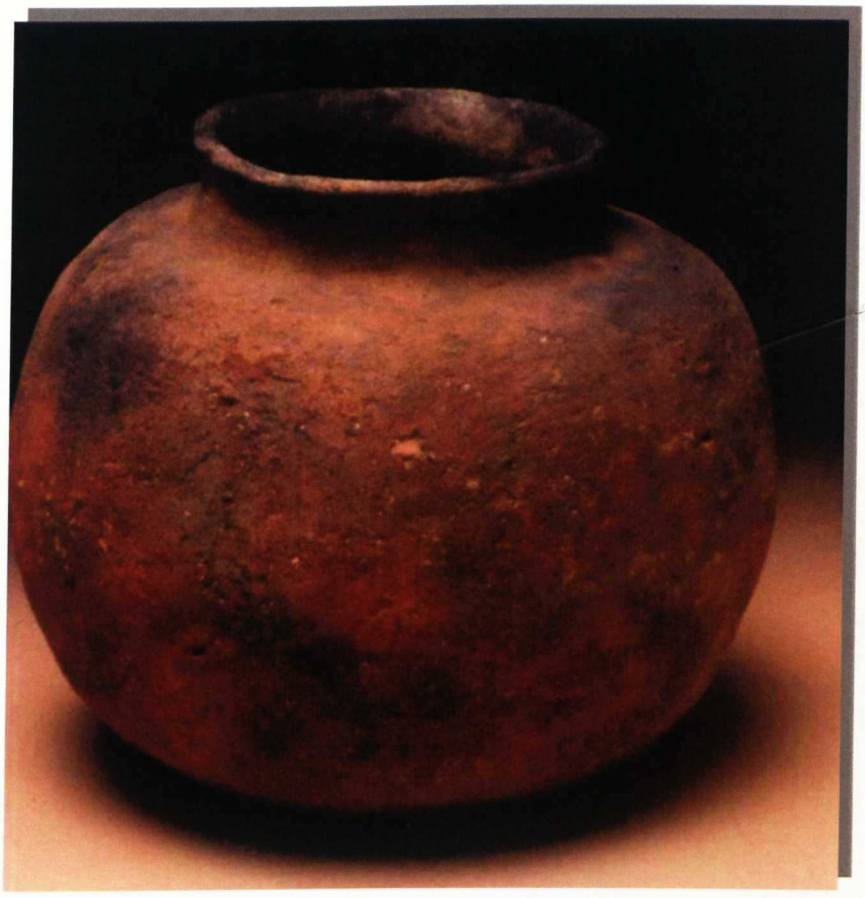


Figure 4.26
Cragganware or 'Croghan' made in the 1930s on Lewis (photo c. Hugh Cheape). This type of pottery remains stylistically unchanged from Medieval forms almost a millennia old.

4.7.2 Coll & Tiree

Several sites on Coll and Tiree (figs. 4.24 & 4.25) indicate occupation or use post-1000 AD. Loch an Duin (NW25 NE 1) was first investigated by Beveridge (1903) and was later examined by Holley (2000:157). The site is an ovoid mound some 16.5 x 24m and is surrounded by stone walling some 0.5m in thickness and standing to 0.5m in height. Holley's interpretation of the site as prehistoric is based largely upon the remaining walling and his system of 'defensive rating', explaining that access is made difficult by the layout of the causeway which utilises a natural outcrop mid-length (2000:158). Yet this interpretation does not consider that most walled islets in the Hebrides are, in fact, datable to the later Medieval Period, i.e. Caisteal Eoghainn a' Chinn Bhig, Dun Ban, Loch na Miol and Eilean Ban (fig. 4.28), while Hebridean sites often have some of the longest causeways such as Loch Cnoc a Bhuidhe, South Uist at 90m in length. If the site has any prehistoric origins, the stone used to create the linear perimeter walling was probably sourced from the original structure thereby obliterating any earlier upstanding features.

Figure 4.27 *Distribution of island dwellings mentioned in text on Islay, Argyll & Bute.*

As this chapter moves through the Inner Hebrides, the relationship of island dwellings to their counterparts in the Western Isles during the Medieval Period becomes more apparent through associations with Norse incomers and the subsequent 'Lords of the Isles'. Dun Anlaimh or 'Olaf's Fort' (NM15 NE 3), in Loch nan Cinneachan, or 'Lake of the Heathen' in Gaelic, was occupied by a local chieftain named Olaf of Norse descent in the 14th century until he was usurped by a MacLean from Duart in 1384AD (Beveridge 1903: 25; MacDougal & Cameron 1937; Holley 2000:162). The causewayed site is an ovoid mound 23 x 28m with drystone walling containing three relatively well preserved remains of rectilinear structures forming what appears to be a longhouse-type structure with a smaller adjacent cell off the west wall. Just south in the same loch is Eilean Analimh, sharing its Norse association with the previous site. This circular artificial mound has a basal diameter of 20m while the usable area

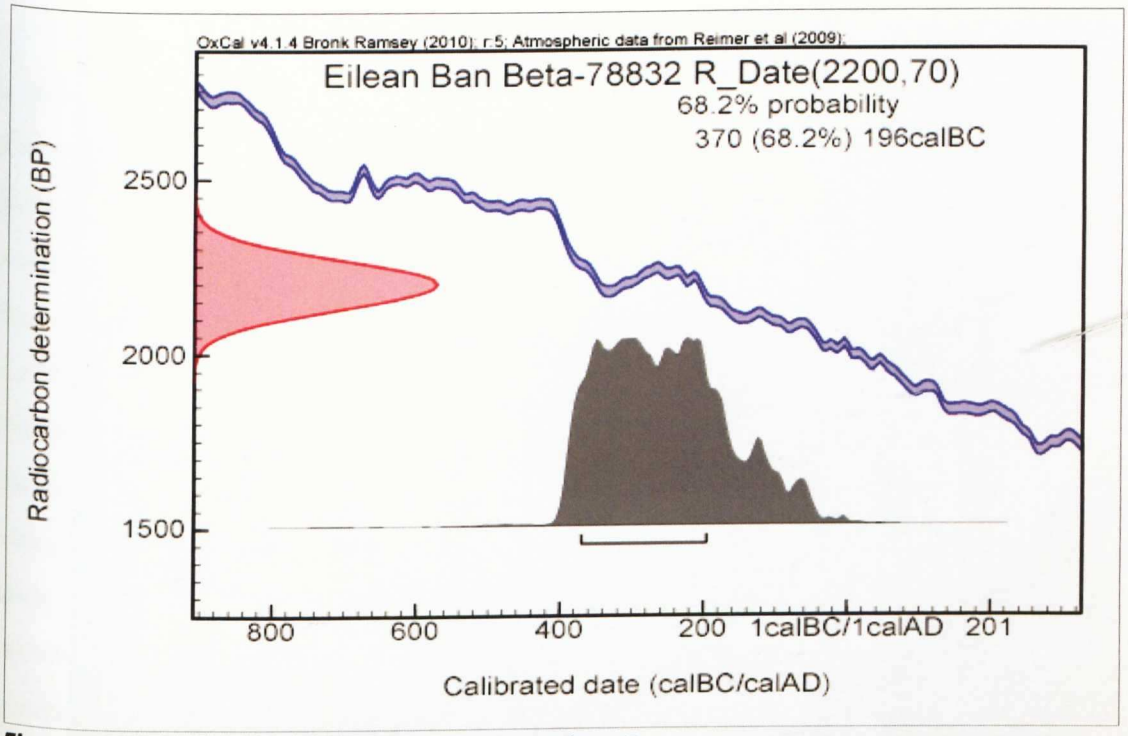


Figure 4.28 *Radiocarbon determination from Eilean Ban.*

Figure 4.29 *Dun Ban, Ulva: A sae-based causewayed natural islet in active use during the 17th century. Such sites are habitually excluded from crannog discussions yet they are not conceptually different.*

Figures 4.30 a/b *Views of Eilean na Comhairle and Eilean Mor, Islay: seat of the Lord of the Isles. The first lord had his castle constructed upon the artificial Eilean na Comhairle or 'council isle' in the 14th century while the bottom photo is of monastic ruins on Eilean Mor (photo courtesy RCAHMS).*

is some 10x12m (RCAHMS 1980:121; Holley 1995: 61). Despite an overall lack of evidence dating to this period, the location in the same loch as a known Medieval site strengthens the possibility of islet activity at a time when mainland sites appear to become reinvigorated. As a likely indicator of reuse from prehistoric origins at Eilean Anlaimh, a saddle quern was discovered amongst the submerged rubble, indicating use before the rotary quern transition, c.200BC (Caulfield 1978; Armit 1991; Holley 2000: 165). Moving some 2.3km NE of Loch Analimh, and 400m N of Loch an Duin, is Loch Cliad which contains no less than three islet dwellings (fig. 4.20). Cliad I at the northern end of the loch is a largely natural causewayed island now some 110x45m at its maximum dimensions after drainage increased the exposed area. The site itself sits as a capping of boulders on a rise at the southern end where the remains of a substantial rectilinear structure 5.8x 7.8m with walling up to 1.4m in thickness survives. Adjacent to this are the remains of two lesser structures which appear as outbuildings (*ibid*: 169). Cliad II (NM25 NW 7), exists as a circular, artificial island under 20m in basal diameter with a usable surface area of 11x13m (Holley 2000: 167).

Finally, 300m SW of Cliad II is Cliad III at the southern end of the loch, some 55m in diameter, containing a sub-rectangular structure approximately 7x8m with two smaller, ephemeral outlying structures to the south. Therefore two sites in the loch indicate Medieval or later use based upon the typological features of the structures. Beveridge's 1903 account indicates that Loch Cliad had been drained by an unknown level, although he did not think it was a substantial amount. (1903: 23). There is little doubt that past inhabitants of Coll embraced the island dwelling tradition. With at least ten island dwellings within an area of 76km^2, the density is only excelled by North Uist (Ch. 6). Of six island dwellings on the neighbouring island of Tiree, two have indicated Medieval or later use through both artefactual and historic references. First is Eilean Aird Nam Brathan (NL94 NE11), while the visible remains of five sections of walling are not typologically datable, several large sherds of 'cragganware' were found by Holly during his examination of the site (2000: 183). This type of pottery (fig. 4.26) is common in the islands of western Scotland and carries a very long chronological currency from approximately the 11th to the early 20th century (Cheape 1993:112). A similar vessel was discovered during the writer's survey work at the Post-Medieval site of Dun Raouill on South Uist (Lenfert 2010) and represents typical domestic containers that were quickly hand manufactured without a wheel. While this is of little use in narrowing a

chronological framework, the point here is to indicate Eilean Aird Nam Brathan shows evidence for use after 1000AD. The second site displaying Medieval use on Tiree is Loch an Eilean (NL 9860 4355) which was reported first in Blaeu's Atlas of 1662 and later in the *Old Statistical Account* of 1797 as being a 'castle' in a island with access via a drawbridge, later demolished to construct a mansion after drainage (Beveridge 1903: 117; Holley 2000: 192).

4.7.3 Islay

The last major island in the Inner Hebridean archipelago is Islay (fig. 4.27), which abuts Jura and lies some 20km west of Kintyre. Of 13 documented island dwellings here, three show indications of Medieval and Post-Medieval use in the form of substantially-built rectangular buildings. First is Loch Corr (NR 26 NW 11) an artificial, causewayed mound averaging 33m in diameter (Holley 1996: 17). Atop the site are two building foundations measuring 4.5x6 and 7x10m respectively. Adjacent to the west of the buildings is a substantial curvilinear wall up to 2m in thickness. These remains likely represent a prehistoric phase of activity while the buildings themselves are related to the blackhouse or highland longhouse tradition seen throughout western Scotland which often are superimposed upon prehistoric remains such as at Meldalloch Island, discussed earlier in this chapter. The second site to show possible Medieval activity, albeit of some debate, is Loch nan Deala (NR46 NW5). While the RCAHMS surveyors were of the view that the structural remains were of late Medieval origin, Holley countered that they were in fact, closely related to the structures on Eilean Domhnuill, North Uist, and clearly prehistoric (RCAHMS 1984; Holley 2000: 203). Despite indicating robust walling up to 2m in thickness and small internal areas of between 2 x2m and 2.7 x 5m, they appear to be representative of a phase between the highland longhouse tradition and much earlier prehistoric cellular examples, i.e. 'Pictish' figure of eight dwellings. Examples from the Outer Hebrides, such as Dun an Sticer, North Uist, contain heavily modified (and substantially reduced) interiors whereby wall thickness increased at the expense of internal area; in the case of Dun an Sticer this was historically linked to activity around 1600AD (RCAHMS 1928:51). Rather confusing matters is a radiocarbon determination from a substantial timber protruding from the stone causeway, returning a determination of 6060±70 BP or 5205-4800 cal. BC (Beta-099284). While this would literally re-write the book on prehistoric island dwelling studies, it is most likely relict material that lay submerged nearby and was used during construction at a much later date.

The survival of 'bog oaks' under these conditions is commonplace, as evidenced by Baillie's ease of accessing ancient timbers during his compilation of the Irish Oak chronology (1995). At any rate, the site likely witnessed activity spanning several millennia based upon the nature of the robust walling and what may be in-situ re-use of building material. A small sondage here would prove useful to clarify the nature of the deposits at Loch nan Deala in light of the widely differing impressions, until which none of the possibilities can be soundly rejected. Loch Ballygrant (NR46 NW 19), is a partially natural occupied island which has been substantially enlarged to approximately 50 x 35m while an adjacent crannog of some 10m in diameter is connected to the main site by a stone causeway. No evidence of occupation is immediately visible on the small site while the former indicates the remains of seven rectilinear structures with the substantial main hall measuring 13 x 7m and two smaller outbuildings 7x5m respectively; all have robust walling some 1.2m in thickness (RCAHMS 1984:155). The Dean of the Isles, Donald Monro, indicated in 1549AD that the islands belonged to the Macleans of Duart (RCAHMS 1984:155).

Eilean Mhic Iain (NR46 NW18) measures some 56x42m overall and contains the remains of three rectilinear structures, the largest of which is 9 x 3m (RCAHMS 1984: 153). This occupied island is also mentioned in a feu-charter from the 1570s while the name can be traced to John Maclan of Ardnamurchan, who became bailie over Islay in the 1490s (RCAHMS 1984: 153; Celoria 1959: 4). Eilean Mhuireill or 'Loch Finlaggan' (NR 36 NE23) is a largely artificial sub-circular mound measuring some 30 x 50m at its base while the usable area is listed as approximately 17.5 x 12.5m (Holley 1996: 20). Local tradition indicates that it served as a 'prison' for the Lords of the Isles, a common legend for numerous Hebridean island dwellings. Nevertheless, there are the remains of two sub-rectangular structures measuring approximately 3x7m internally; RCAHMS (RCAHMS 1984: 154). Holley was only able to investigate one as overgrowth prevented an examination of the other structure. In regards to the possible use as a prison, as Holley rightly notes, there is no causeway while the depth between shore reaches 3m and would certainly require a boat (2000: 210). Essentially, the structural remains here indicate a substantial building averaging some 1.5-2m in wall thickness while the layout is clearly Medieval in origin.

However, perhaps the clearest picture available of Mid to Late Medieval crannog use in Scotland lies 750 metres away at the northern end of the loch: Eilean na Comhairle, or

'council island' (NR36 NE20) a 30m diameter artificial island which was the principle residence for John, First Lord of the Isles (1329-1380AD), linked to Eilean Mor (NR36 NE 6) some 50m away, a substantially larger natural island which has the remains of some seven buildings, including chapels, upon the site (figs. 3.22, 3.23). Control over much of Atlantic Scotland was disputed in the centuries following the MacDonalds rise to power. As the MacDonalds were the last in a long line of descendants from the obscure Somerled MacGillebrigte in the 12th century, the Inner Hebrides remained a centralised location from which to rule the maritime kingdom of Western Scotland (McDonald 1997: 39).

Although written references to the islands extend back to the 14th century, by the end of the 17th century the dwellings were reported to be in a 'ruinous state' (Celoria 1959). The 'castle' as such now survives as substantial foundations underlying two later buildings with walling some 1.5m in thickness (Caldwell 1993: 63). It was also during this period that mortar is more commonly seen amongst ruins; this is the case here as evidence by the use of lime and clay mortar on a number of the surviving foundational sections. The choice of John MacDonald of the smaller artificial island as the site for his castle instead of the more substantial natural island is telling here as the location and limited access, *via* the main island before reaching the crannog, projects the desire to occupy a place seen as apart and exclusive in the fullest sense of the expression. The fact that a crannog in Loch Finlaggan was effectively the administrative hub of a far-reaching maritime kingdom represents a tangible element of status which can be attributed to island dwellings in the Medieval Period. While this certainly cannot be said of all occupied islets during this era, it is likely the majority were occupied by persons of at least some status, such as landholders (Gaelic *Lairds*) or the growing class of 'fear-taic' or tacksmen (*see* Ch.5). This group consisted of middle-ranking men who rented *taic* or a plot of land from the free-holder (i.e. Laird) and subsequently sublet it out amongst their immediate kin or close clansmen. Historically they appear to have been major occupants of island dwellings during the Medieval and Post-Medieval periods (Johnson 1775; Raven 2006).

Large midden deposits were revealed surrounding the islands in 1994, reinforcing the notion that waste disposal was a pragmatic, if not effortless, attraction of island life (above). In 1997 excavators had the notable assistance of the Army in constructing a dam around some 80m^2 of the midden and conducting 'dry' excavations (Caldwell 1997: 19). Found above the gravel-

sealed midden containing leather shoe fragments, pottery and large quantity of organics such as worked wood and bone, were two coins dated to c.1225AD and a 14th century pilgrim's badge from Rome (Caldwell 1996: 14). This clear stratigraphic division indicates considerable activity likely pre-dating the known phases of the site yet the luxury of historical documents and narrowly datable coinage for the later phases allows a degree of clarity not afforded to the overwhelming majority of island dwellings.

4.8 Chapter discussion and conclusions

With the documented range of LBA/IA sites, such as Meldalloch Island, Loch Avich, Loch Leathan and Dubh Loch, Argyll demonstrates an affinity for this unique site-type which begins at least three millennia ago. The maritime environment of Argyll influences this tradition, relaying cultural influences across the Irish Sea while the larger inland lochs also see large numbers at dispersed intervals. There exist a number of small overlooked artificial islets which have not been examined in any great detail, while their function and relation to adjacent sites remains unclear. Their possible use as excarnation stances is as valid as any interpretation offered, yet evidence of this nature will be difficult to present without excavation geared specifically for this hypothesis. The location of small crannog mounds in Loch Awe, paired at opposite ends of the loch and on opposite sides, would have been one of the first sights to greet incomers along the loch margins suggesting a symbolic rather than pragmatic function. The disparities between the material record in Western Scotland and Ireland can be viewed as potentially misleading due to the poor preservation of organics on terrestrial sites. As wetland sites provide a greatly enhanced picture of organic survival, it is perhaps attractive to assign them higher social status solely due to the differential in preservation. In this light, Loch Glashan could be seen as a site of status despite the artefactual evidence suggesting it was a leatherworking centre, and therefore subsidiary in nature to Dunadd. At any rate, Loch Glashan did at least occasionally receive visitors from the higher echelons, though the residents were more likely of a skilled artisan class or simply labourers.

Virtually every crannog from the Early Historic period has produced evidence of metalworking in the form of crucibles or slag, finally indicating a broad shift towards metalworking. This is despite Atlantic Scotland having been in the 'Iron Age' for some 12

centuries already, an ill-suited moniker for this part of Western Europe. It has been argued that an absence of lithic implements implies metalwork in areas where it would not normally survive (Armit 1996), yet clay moulds and evidence of furnace-like vitrification on site are also widely absent until the mid-first millennium AD. As mentioned above, work at Loch Glashan revealed a large leatherworking and wooden artefact assemblage while producing limited finds of high status goods deposited on-site, with the exception of the imported Frankish glass and a penannular brooch of Norse influence, another rarity for Mid-Argyll (Crone & Campbell 2005: 126). The 1960 excavation was short on environmental and stratigraphical data due to the techniques in use at the time and the fact that excavations were halted by the water level. The effort was also under time constraints due to the hydro-electric scheme and was regarded as a rescue effort. This prevented a detailed view of the site that may not be expanded after Henderson's recent discovery that the crannog is wholly inaccessible and may never be physically re-examined (Crone & Campbell 2005:23).

At Loch Awe, the excavations at Ederline have yet again indicated broad, multi-period re-use of island dwellings, despite the fact that only a small portion of the crannog has been excavated. Currently, no plans exist for continued investigation at Ederline (Henderson , pers. comm.). The sherds of E-ware found may only represent casual deposition and subsequent interpretation remains to be developed. The relationship of crannogs to royal seats such as Dunadd and Dunollie mirror the geographical similarities of several Irish crannogs such as Lagore or Ballinderry to sites of status, serving agricultural or industrial functions in relation to ruling centres. Dunadd was extensively excavated and has become an iconic symbol of Early Historic Argyll and DálRiata. The site has demonstrated repetitive contact with the Continent through the variety of E-ware. The brooch moulds hold particular potential as future discoveries of brooches could well be linked to production at Dunadd, revealing the individual biographies of these artefacts. Dunollie is another site of status as indicated by both the historical and archaeological information. The location of these terrestrial sites reveals that perhaps two different *cenéls* ruled from these seats; their similar size and assemblage does not readily indicate one site acting as a satellite to the other. What the record tells us about emigration from Ireland is counter to popular belief. Although it is fairly certain that a shift in power within the Irish Sea Zone occurred, the linguistic and, to a lesser degree, similarities in material culture, indicates that similar interaction was already in place during previous centuries. Crannogs in particular will continue to contribute much to this

debate due to their presence in both areas and ability to provide outstanding levels of preservation. Future excavation in Ireland, as productive work at Coolure Demense recently testifies, will continue to expand our perception of sites from both sides of the Irish Sea and Atlantic Scotland.

Finally, in regards to continuity between Atlantic Scotland and Ireland, there is little doubt of links that went beyond cursory exchange, materialising long before the Early Historic period. As Armit points out, systems of contact were already in place by the mid-2nd millennium AD given the necessity of long-distance trade networks for the production of Bronze (2001: 14). While there are distinctive elements to the assemblages from both areas, the similarities in the prehistoric architectural record of Atlantic roundhouses in Scotland, in comparison to the raths, cashels and defended stone enclosures of Ireland highlight these long-standing cultural similarities and traditions – albeit with often separate identities. In this sense, island dwellings are the clearest indicators of a cultural 'package' throughout the settlement record, clearly distinguishing both areas from other areas of the British Isles.

The abrupt halt for island dwelling use during the Norse period suggests the Scandinavian incomers had a dramatic impact, either displacing or subjugating the indigenous inhabitants, initially through raiding and later settlement, although Argyll seems to have received little of the latter. If island dwellings were residences of status, then political upheaval on at least localised scales appears sufficient enough to interrupt the tradition. Likewise, changing tastes in settlement forms during this period could simply have made living on water both unfashionable or even unnecessary, making it statistically less visible in the archaeological record. Whatever the possibilities for this apparent hiatus, the 12th century again sees the onset of resumed activity within the lochs until the Post Medieval Period, where land charters noted their presence, albeit in the briefest of written passages. Later accounts from inquisitive travellers such as Dean Monro in the 16th century, along with early cartographers, provide solid evidence of the continued use of islets throughout Scotland though anything approaching an ethnographic account specifically dealing with island dwellers is not available. The widespread adoption of occupied islets in the Inner Hebrides is also not surprising, given the nature of settlement along the west coast of Scotland and especially the Western Isles,. This makes Argyll a transitional region in the fullest sense, having both a 'Highland and Islands' demeanour in the archaeological record.

PAGES
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Chapter 5

The Archaeological Landscape of Island Dwellings in the Western Isles

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The Western Isles

Although within sight of the Scottish mainland, the Western Isles are, in many ways, a different world both in the archaeological and modern sense. As Ian Armit describes in *Beyond the Brochs,* 'The Western Isles exist on the periphery of archaeological awareness: a forbidding tangle of brochs, duns, galleried duns, island duns, wheelhouses' (1990:41). In regards to 'island duns' this notion is reinforced by the remote location of this island chain which contains over 7,000 lochs and lochans[1]. To put this into perspective, the Western Isles make up only 1.3% of the United Kingdom's landmass, yet they have some 15% of the freshwater surface area, over eleven and a half times the average found elsewhere in the UK. It is exactly this quantity of relatively shallow lochs, dotted with bedrock reefs and small natural islets, which offers up the most favourable conditions for the occupation of small islands in Scotland. As a result, the Western Isles contain the highest density of island dwellings in Scotland (figs. 5.1 & 5.2).

The long-standing tradition of living on lochs in Scotland is demonstrated throughout this thesis through the use of occupied islets. However, the Western Isles stand out in the archaeological record of Scotland in this regard due to the sheer density and popularity of island dwellings in comparison to any other area of the British Isles. Although there is an inherent degree of insularity to living in this island chain, the range of settlement forms seen both in the Hebrides and elsewhere in Scotland (i.e. from artificial islets, wheelhouses, brochs to west Highland longhouses and early castles) indicates that viewing the Western Isles as an entirely discreet entity is inaccurate. The relative isolation of the Western Isles (by modern standards) has perhaps unfairly painted a picture of a timeless, Gaelic speaking

[1] http://www.uklakes.net/searchresults.php?sortfield=WBID&sortdir=DESC&limit=7410 as of 07-04-2009. Many of those listed are <.1 Ha or may be seasonal in nature.

enclave of crofters toiling away in a harsh, windswept environment just to survive (*see* 5.11 below). In reality, the Western Isles are subject to very mild temperatures due to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream. Since the Met Office began keeping weather records in Stornoway, Lewis in 1873, 139 years ago, only 33 of those years have had *any* winter months where the average temperature fell below zero Celsius, often by less than one degree[2]. In contrast, other geographical areas on the same latitude (between 56° and 58° N) such as Northern Labrador, still contain trace areas of permafrost while the weather station in Braemar, Scotland, despite lying 135km south of Stornoway, has recorded at least one month below zero Celsius every winter since their records began in 1959. The Western Isles also are home to some of the richest grounds for shellfish in the North Atlantic, much of which is accessible at low tide making this area abundant in maritime resources, while the agricultural viability along the machairs is well documented in the archaeological record. Therefore, the Western Isles have one of the mildest climates of any region in these latitudes.

5.1.2 Aims of Chapter

This chapter will examine the rationale behind the prolific use of island dwellings in the Western Isles to create a long-term narrative of islet use in this maritime setting. This approach considers location, chronology, visible phases of use or reuse and finds to create interpretations on the role of occupied islets within Hebridean societies (fig. 5.3). In particular, the Western Isles contains a lengthy island dwelling chronology which extends from the Neolithic to the Post Medieval Periods, allowing a unique opportunity to examine long-term use, continuity and change. Equally, given the intensity with which island dwellings were utilised in the Western Isles, it is surprising that no attempts have been made until now at creating a narrative which allows an examination from an islet perspective, i.e. choosing to live on water.

One challenge to researchers in the archaeologically rich landscape of the Western Isles is the changing physical environment over the past five millennia; besides a rise in the sea level, the machairs (essentially large sand dunes) along the west coast are constantly shifting and expanding while blanket peats in the interior thrive to depths of 2 meters or more. From

[2] http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/stationdata/stornowaydata.txt as of 09-08-2011.

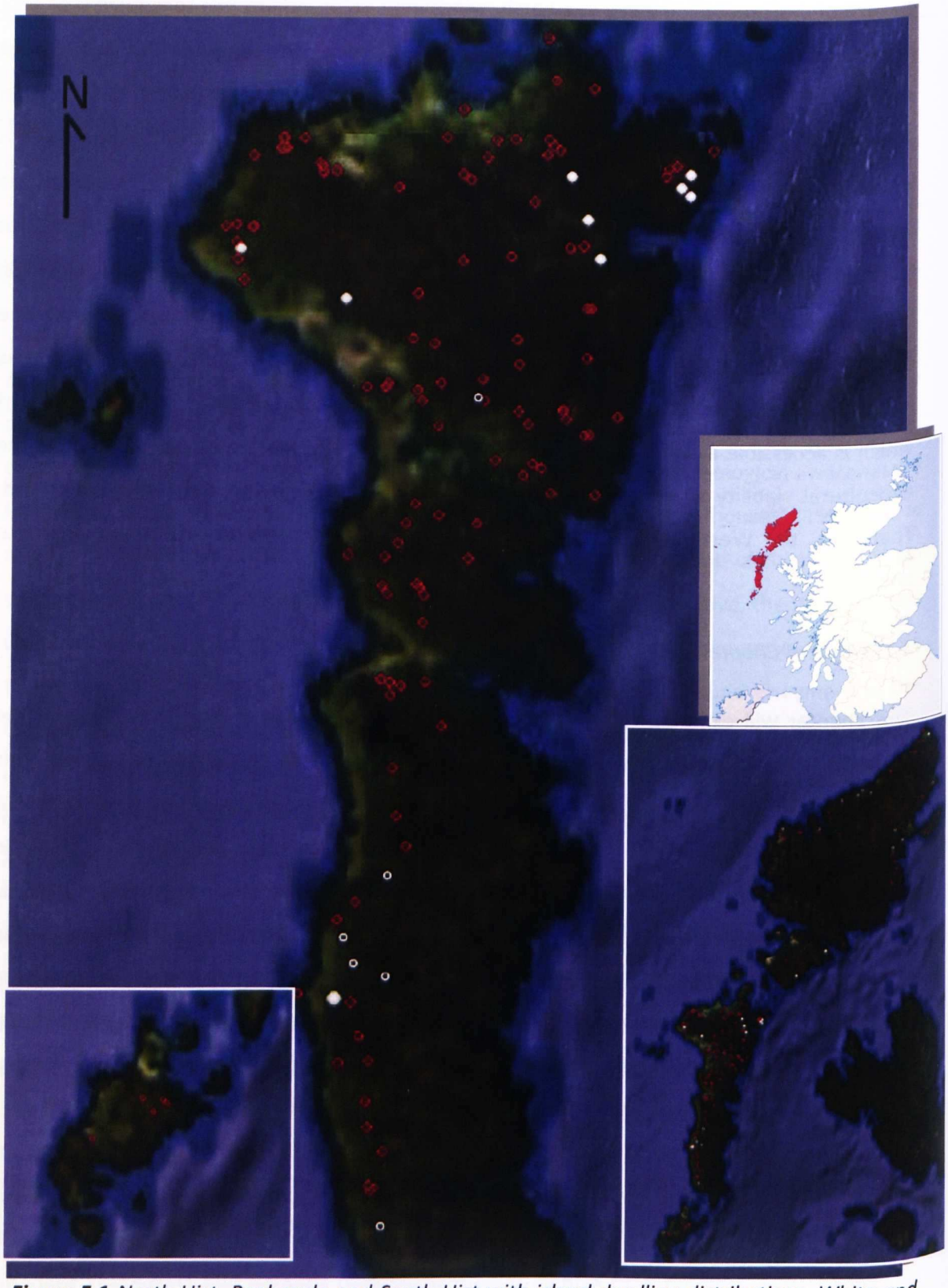


Figure 5.1 *North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist with island dwelling distributions. White and black circles represent 'crannogs' while red sites are simply listed as 'duns'. White dots are suspected sites I have located on aerial photos for future investigation. Barra is inset in the upper right.*

Figure 5.2 *Distribution of island dwellings in Harris and Lewis. Considerable potential exists for locating new islet sites in the interior blacklands.*

an environmental standpoint, this prolific growth of blanket peats in the interior serves to obscure the visibility of prehistoric settlement; conversely it also provides a stable form of preservation effectively encasing drystone forms in a protective 'shell' which produces anaerobic conditions for organic survival (Armit 1992a: 6).The majority of modern inhabitants live on the west coast; this has subsequently influenced the discovery of new

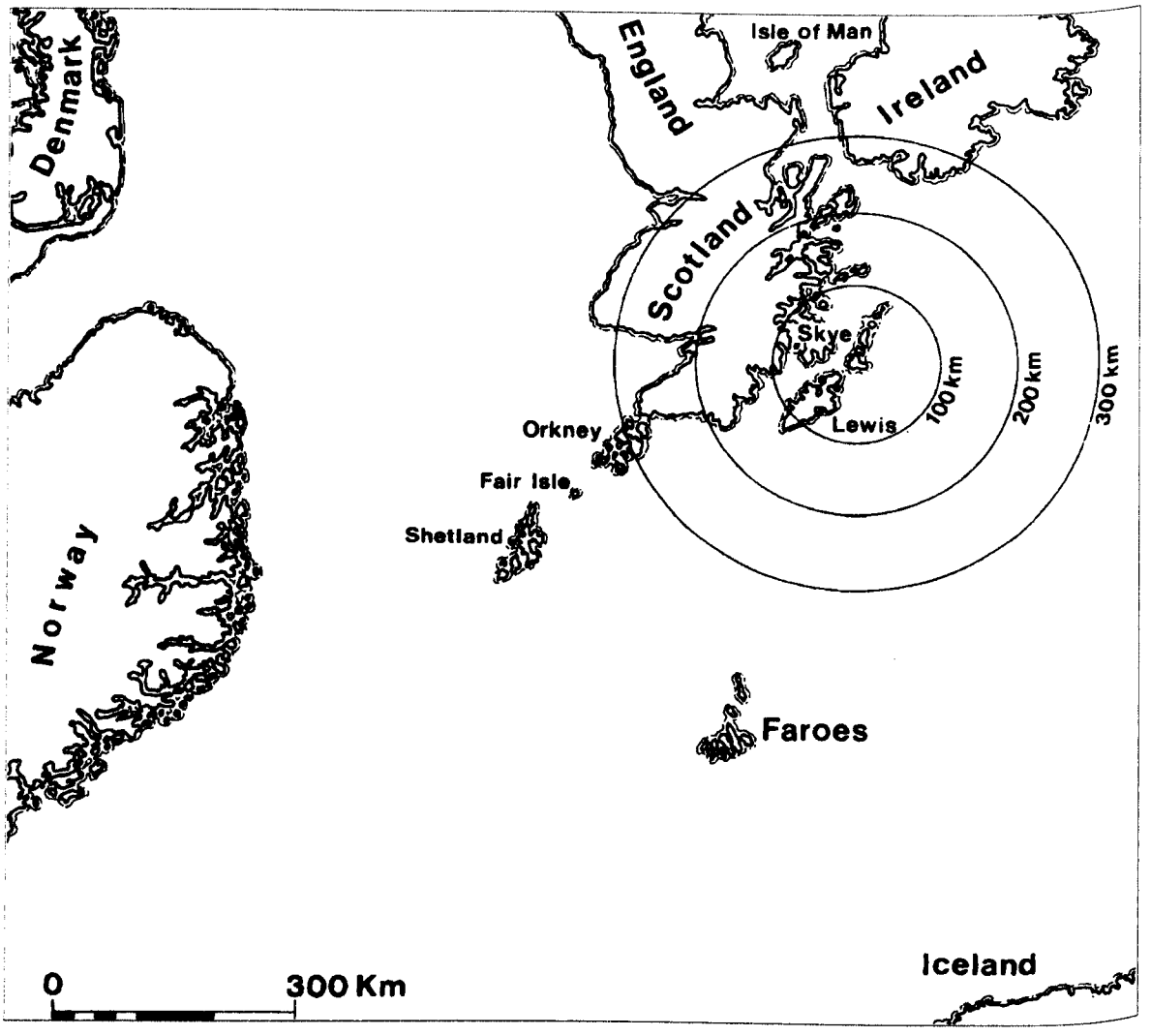


***Figure 5.3** Cognitive view of the Western Isles after Parker Pearson & Sharples 2004).*

sites as a result of human activity. However, the relative shortage of building materials and higher western population density has exposed known sites to intensive robbing of prehistoric drystone material since at least the 16th century[3]. Written accounts describing this practice are noted in the earliest accounts of Hebridean life in the mid to late 18th century (Mackie 2007: 1405, no.2), yet this practice undoubtedly has a much older lineage going back centuries, if not millennia. Captain F.W.L. Thomas dryly remarked on this tradition when visiting the Western Isles:

> *A horrid practise exists in these islands of ruining these ancient buildings by robbing them of their flagstones, to serve for the lintels of doors and windows for their wretched little cottages (1890: 400).*

[3]See Chapter 6: Dun an Sticer was a reoccupied broch which was heavily modified in the Post-Medieval Period.

It is impossible to estimate how many sites, especially upstanding terrestrial remains, have been totally eradicated or recycled since the Post-Medieval Period. Many drystone structures have been re-used *in situ* (Armit 1998: 255), or used for more modern structures such as blackhouses and shielings (fig. 5.4) especially along the western machairs (Beveridge 1911:138).

5.1.3 Hebridean 'island duns' and 'crannogs' briefly revisited

As considered in the second chapter, a considerable amount of time has been spent by archaeologists attempting to define the nature of prehistoric drystone Atlantic architecture in the Western Isles, rather than the nature of islet settlement here (Munro 1882; Thomas 1890; Beveridge 1911; Blundell 1913; RCAHMS 1928; MacKie 1965, 2007; Morrison 1985; Harding and Topping 1986; Armit 1990, 1992, 1998; Harding 2000). It appears that the most useful outcome of this is the recognition that attempting to create strict definitions for a suite of sites that all have their own unique characteristics generally impedes the development of wider developments such as identity, contact, and social organisation around an 'Atlantic continuum' (Henderson 2007a: 57). As Harding succinctly states: 'Iron Age builders were not concerned to preserve the integrity of archaeologists' classifications' (2000: 303).

This realisation, of course, does not imply that a degree of classification is unnecessary (*see* 2.2.1, above). Because of their drystone architecture which contrasts sharply with mainland timber crannogs, Hebridean island dwellings are typically viewed together with terrestrial Atlantic roundhouses (Henderson 1998: 238; Armit 1996: 51). Although many islets here do have recognisable Atlantic roundhouse architecture, the majority show little clear indication that they contain 'duns', often simply revealing low courses of stonework and small cellular features. Yet their conceptual foundations such as islet location and outward similarities to crannogs such as causeways, revetments and harbours means that mainland sites must also be considered when interpreting form or function. Another issue that has obvious implications for islet artificiality and subsequent categorisation is the fact that many Hebridean islets have not been physically visited by archaeologists, rather viewed from the

Figure 5.4 *Hogarry, North Uist - photo by Erskine Beveridge taken in 1904. The opportunistic reuse of ancient drystone structures in the Western Isles was endemic. This is understandable in light of the limited sources of alternate materials.*

shore and noted in the monuments record (RCAHMS 1928)[4], while those occupied islets that have been tread upon have rarely been examined underwater. Therefore the total number of 22 Hebridean sites 'crannogs' which currently exist in the NMRS may change substantially as future investigation records the composition of the mound in the same manner fieldwork at Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn for this thesis has indicated (*see* Ch.6 below).

While it is apparent that Hebridean island duns fulfilled the same generalised function to the occupants be it defensive, domestic, ritual etc., as any crannog found elsewhere in Scotland,[5] there can be a reluctance to place the two side by side categorically despite efforts by several researchers to resolve this (Morrison 1985:37; Armit 1992a; Harding 2000:

[4] The last survey by the RCAHMS was published over 80 years ago and highlights the lack of survey in the Outer Hebrides despite efforts by Sheffield University and SEARCH in South Uist in the last decade (Parker Pearson, *et al, 1999;* Parker-Pearson 2004).

[5] According to Armit (1990:51), Odo Blundell's investigations (1913) of lake-dwellings in the Western Isles are mainly responsible for the ensuing definition of crannogs being added in the 1928 RCAHMS publication alongside island duns although some 'crannogs' are indistinguishable from 'island duns' due to collapse, concealment or removal of the drystone architecture.

301; Holley 2000; Henderson: *forthcoming;* Crone and Cavers 2008). Unusual for Hebridean studies, Ian Armit's later prehistoric gazetteer (1992a, appendix 3), classifies sites as either 'Atlantic roundhouses', 'wheelhouses', 'cellular structures', 'linear structures', 'promontory forts', 'walled islets' or 'miscellaneous structures' and, importantly, notes if they are on an islet in his sub-headings. This is ultimately a more useful and coherent approach than the general classifications used by the RCAHMS, which cross-lists many sites under 'duns' as well as other categories, i.e. building or broch.

Of Outer Hebridean sites listed as 'crannogs' in both the Canmore database and the 1928 RCAHMS survey, only two have been the subject of recent attention in the form of a report from a walkover survey at Loch An Duna, Bragar, Lewis (NB24 NE56) filed with the commission in June of 2007 (RCAHMS: 2009a), and a brief note on timbers observed in Loch Airidh na Lic (RCAHMS 1928: no. 51). As Cavers states: 'These [Hebridean islet] sites have been investigated under the auspices of Atlantic Iron Age studies with the traditional research focuses of that field' (2006: 70), a view reiterated by Harding who makes no mention of the term crannog when describing island duns in the Western Isles; rather he places them in the suite of Atlantic roundhouses and does not make any comparisons to mainland sites (2004: 116). Harding focuses upon architectural detail which is, not surprisingly, most closely related to terrestrial Atlantic roundhouses rather than *packwerk* or timber and brush sites. The fact remains that island duns share many inherent traits with crannogs and must be considered in relation to the overall suite of island dwellings on the fundamental basis of location and monumentality, combining apparent defensive characteristics with a preference for a liminal location that is prominent in the landscape with a long-standing desire to inhabit watery places. This view is more productive than simply basing categorisations upon degree of artificiality and materials used, i.e. wood or stone (Henderson, 1998; 2009).

Despite a general lack of survey or excavation of island dwellings in the Western Isles, they are ultimately better placed into the overall settlement record of Scotland. This is ironic as better-studied mainland crannogs, until recently, have been viewed almost as an abstract form, detached from the larger corpus of settlement studies (Henderson 2007a). More recent work, (Cavers 2006; Henderson 2007b; *forthcoming*; Crone & Cavers 2008) has

attempted to place crannogs within their wider context; something archaeologists have generally been reluctant to tackle. Indeed, island duns in particular can be rightly described as a 'hybrid' between crannogs and terrestrial drystone architecture, which thereby warrants consideration as an important link between crannogs and domestic monumental architecture, both contextually and chronologically, a view also mirrored by Cavers (2006:70).

5.1.4 The chronological origins and span of Outer Hebridean island dwellings

This concept of 'hybridisation' is especially relevant to chronological discussions of the Western Isles, especially given the origins of island duns in the Neolithic Period when timber availability was indeed much greater than later prehistoric periods. Only three islet sites in Scotland currently indicate Neolithic occupation – yet it is notable all are found in the Western Isles: Eilean Domhnuill (NF77 NW3; Armit 2003a: 93; *forthcoming*), Eileann an Tighe (NF87 SW1; Beveridge 1911:221-222; Scott 1950) and Pygmie's Isle (NB56 NW4; MacKenzie 1905: 252; Armit 1996: 50-52; Henderson 1998:239). Although Neolithic use is present, the continuity of islet use is not apparent during the Bronze Age. This Hebridean dynamic of islet use follows a similar chronological trajectory as demonstrated on the mainland with intensive Iron Age through Norse occupation, followed by later Medieval and Post-Medieval use. This early occupation is discussed in section 5.3, below.

Following a 'vague' Iron Age horizon into continuous Early Historic/Late Iron Age use, the cycles of construction, use, abandonment and re-occupation of Hebridean islet forms continues steadily throughout the Medieval Period to as late as the 18th century AD when Castle Bheagream (NF73NE 4) on South Uist was still occupied circa 1715. (Miers 2008: 12). As late as 1830, a tower[6] was built using the remains of the prehistoric island dwelling at Dun Scolpaig (NF77 NW6), which indicates that continued interest in islets often took divergent forms. The widespread Medieval use of islets also allows a glimpse at events through written records which are often more detailed than mainland accounts of islet use. The late medieval occupant, Donald Herroch [of Harris], was reputedly murdered by 'jealous relatives' on Dun Scolpaig in 1506 (*New Statistical Account* 1845: 170; Beveridge 1911:193). Beyond newsworthy events as above, the medieval record in the Hebrides (both oral and

[6] The tower was apparently built as a 'folly'; not surprisingly it utilised stone from the existing dun.

written) also gives accounts of the social organisation for Hebridean island dwelling occupants, as Donald Herroch was a tacksman or rent paying landholder who acted as a middle-man between lairds and the lower farming classes (*see* 1.7.2; Raven 2005: 476). This lengthy chronology is perhaps unrivalled anywhere in the archaeological record outside of Middle Eastern *tells*. It is therefore difficult to not consider island duns alongside crannogs despite any categorical differences in construction techniques, materials or degree of artificiality due to the common theme of reuse and reoccupation; this denotes a willingness to repetitiously invest labour and time into a sites that are often difficult to maintain. The similarities of living on these relatively small islands simply outweigh any differences when attempting to strictly categorise the two subsets of island dwellings.

5.1.5 Known quantities of occupied islets in the Western Isles

177 Outer Hebridean islets are considered within this research (*see* Appendix 1: Lewis (38), Harris (5), North Uist (80), Benbecula (14), South Uist (35) and five on Barra. Hebridean investigations began in earnest just over a century ago with Erskine Beveridge who surmised that there existed approximately 'a hundred ancient forts... from some very remote period until well into the sixteenth century' in the Western Isles (1911: 132). Of sites identified by Beveridge, island dwellings comprised the most frequent site type in North Uist with his initial figure of sixty occupied islets in freshwater lochs and ten in sea lochs. Oddly, current RCAHMS results (Appendix 1) from the Canmore database, as does the 1928 survey, list only three sites here as 'island dwellings'. In total, 194 Hebridean sites are listed as 'duns' but make no mention whether they are islets or not and require the use of aerial photography to make the distinction. An additional 16 sites are listed as 'brochs' while 13 are 'aisled roundhouses,' 17 are listed as 'wheelhouses' and 9 are termed 'galleried duns' in the Western Isles (RCAHMS 2009b). 22 Outer Hebridean 'crannogs' are listed in the Canmore database; this definition has more to do with lack of visible structures rather than the presence of wood (Canmore 2009a). The few exceptions to this include North Tolsta, Lewis (Blundell 1913; Armit 1996: 52) where timbers were observed during drainage operations, suggesting an early date (i.e. pre-Iron Age). Another is Loch Airidh na Lic near Stornoway,

Lewis, reported to have produced timbers during drainage in 1902 ,however the later Dixon & Topping survey failed to observe any when the site was revisited underwater (1986:191).

5.2 A Brief History of Fieldwork and Survey in the Western Isles

5.2.1 Terrestrial Archaeology

The Western Isles has received sporadic attention over the past two centuries from both antiquarians and archaeologists alike. The earliest work in the Outer Hebrides can be traced back to Colin MacKenzie who surveyed and sketched Dun Carloway in Lewis and related how local tradition regards island duns as 'built by the Norwegians' (1792:287). However, much of what is known today about the prehistoric landscape, especially on North Uist and Vallay, is due to work by Erskine Beveridge, a successful linen merchant from Dunfermline who took up archaeology with a passion and moved to a stately home on Vallay which is now sadly in ruins. His first major archaeological publications *Coll and Tiree* (1903) and later *North Uist: Its Archaeology and Topography* (1911) still remain in print today. Beveridge excavated a total of nineteen sites in North Uist. Two of his publications were published posthumously after his death in 1920 (Beveridge 1930; 1931). This intensive, long-term effort by Beveridge recorded a high number of prehistoric sites near his home on Vallay; his contributions are still very evident in the archaeological record today (Armit 1992: 12).

In the latter half of the 20th century intermittent terrestrial survey and excavation in the Hebrides was continued by Sir Lindsay Scott at Clettraval and Unival, North Uist (1947), T.C. Lethbridge at Kilphedar (1952), and Alison Young at Tigh Talamhanta, Barra and Dun Cuier (1952; 1955). Additional work was completed by the Ministry of Works during construction of a military rocket range on South Uist and Benbecula, which primarily focused upon several western machair wheelhouses (Armit 1992: 14). This work was followed by largely machair-based excavations in North Uist by John Barber with the now defunct Scottish Development Department, who carried out rescue excavations at the eroding coastal sites of Sollas, Baleshare, Balelone, Hornish point and Gorton in 1984, unearthing evidence of Bronze and Iron Age occupation (Barber 2003; Parker-Pearson *et al.* 2004:19). In the 1960s Iain Crawford (Crawford and Switsur 1977) began a long term project at the Udal, North Uist that remains unpublished; the project dealt with a single site and was primarily concerned with long term continuity and change; the chronology at the Udal extended from the

Neolithic until 1697 AD (Armit 1992:15; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004: 18). The majority of survey work and excavation in the Outer Hebrides has included the full suite of monumental architecture, especially complex Atlantic roundhouses such as Dun Carloway, Lewis. In 1971 work commenced on the broch here by C. Tabraham which produced fragments of a rotary quern, a bone-headed pin, and pottery sherds that apparently resembled Irish forms (Tabraham 1976:166). The SEARCH programme initiated by the University of Sheffield began in the late 1980s and conducted extensive fieldwork on South Uist, Barra and the Bishops Isles[7] culminating in excavations at Cladh Hallan and Alt Chrisal, amongst a number of smaller projects (Brannigan and Foster 2002). This was followed by solo excavations at Grimsay wheelhouse by a retired engineer, Roy Ashworth, from 1994-1997 (Hothersall & Tye 2000:22). Most recently, Becky Rennell (2009) completed a PhD on the Iron Age landscape of the Western Isles, whereby an extensive number of sites were visited, employing an 'experiential landscape approach' involving a phenomenological and GIS-based research framework.

5.2.2 *Archaeological work on island dwellings*

Out of this total of 177 island dwellings in the Western Isles, only 13 islets (0.073%) have been subject to organised excavations. Dun Ban, Grimsay was the first recorded island dwelling excavation by Captain F.W.L Thomas (1890). Beveridge excavated six sites: Rudh an Duin, Vallay (1911) Dun a Ghallain (1911), Eilean Maelit (re-excavated by Armit – below; 1911), Eilean a Ghallain (1911), Eileann an Tighe (partial) and Dun Thomaidh (1930) all of which are on North Uist. Seven island dwelling excavations in the Western Isles can be considered modern: Dun Bharabhat, Cnip, Lewis (Harding and Dixon 2000) Berigh, Riof, Lewis (Harding and Gilmour 2000), Eilean Domhnuill, North Uist (Armit 1986, 1988, 1990b; 2003), Eilean Olabhat (Armit *et al.* 2009), Eilean Maelit (re-excavated; Armit 1998), Dun Vulan, South Uist (Parker-Pearson *et al.* 1999) and finally, test trenching on Upper Loch Bornish (Marshall & Parker Pearson 1998). Notably, all of the islets above are classified as 'duns' or 'settlements' and not as any recognizable type of island dwelling. By 1985 the

[7]The 'Bishops Isles' is the name given to the smaller, sparsely occupied islands which lie to the south of Barra. The names stems from Dean Munro's travels (1549) and was adopted by the SEARCH programme as no other collective term exists (Brannigan and Foster 2002: 4).

University of Edinburgh commenced plans for an intensive programme termed the Callanish Archaeological Research Project (CARP) which resulted in the excavations (both underwater and terrestrial) at Loch Bharabhat, Cnip (Harding and Dixon 2000) and also at Berigh' Riof, Lewis (Harding and Gilmour 2000). Loch Olabhat, North Uist became the focus of work by Ian Armit in 1985 producing, rather surprisingly, evidence of Neolithic occupation on Eilean Domhnuill (*see* 5.3).

5.2.3 Underwater survey and investigations in the Western Isles

Only three underwater surveys or investigations have been carried out in the Western Isles. The first was carried out by T.N. Dixon and P.G. Topping in 1986 (discussed below). This was followed by Shelley and Raven who examined several sites in South Uist (2005) and finally, fieldwork conducted for this research on South Uist, Benbecula, North Uist, Grimsay, Berneray and Lewis (*see* Ch.6; Lenfert 2009; Lenfert 2010). The Dixon and Topping survey marked an important step forward in island dun research as this was the first serious attempt at examining these sites below the waterline. This survey also revealed sherds of later-prehistoric and medieval pottery from two islands in Loch Baravat, Crowlista (NB 039 349), one of which produced evidence for a boat noost (*ibid:* 191). Dixon and Topping concluded that the work previously published in the 1928 RCAHMS survey was insufficient and contained errors when viewed through the lens of contemporary archaeological techniques (*ibid*: 189). Dun Bharabhat, Cnip was one of the surveyed sites; it was from this initial survey the decision was made to excavate the site as part of the CARP project owing to good site visibility and the presence of several courses of stone walling with pottery sherds scattered about the base of the revetment. Not all the Dixon and Topping survey sites revealed the presence of artificial foundations; rather several indicated they were completely natural without indication of human activity or occupation. While this may not be an exciting revelation for archaeologists, it does highlight the challenges facing those who design field work strategies on often limited budgets while refining the overall known distribution. In this respect initial underwater survey is integral to the crucial decision of where to focus future resources. The Dixon and Topping survey is now some 25 years old; there are still over one hundred islets from North Uist to Barra that have not been examined underwater. This is an area that certainly deserves more consideration and will no doubt

continue to generate a substantial amount of data for both Hebridean and Scottish archaeology.

5.2.4 Survey in the Inner Hebrides

The Inner Hebrides are included here as island dwellings here are stylistically very similar to their Outer Hebridean counterparts. Inner Hebridean sites have been the focal point of RCAHMS survey work intermittently throughout the 20th century; however no underwater investigations were undertaken during these initial surveys (RCAHMS 1928, 1980, 1984). This changed in the 1990s with Mark Holley's survey work for his doctoral thesis (Holley 2000). This effort made a similar contribution to our knowledge of island dwellings in the Inner Hebrides as many of the sites had not been investigated above water and certainly not below. Holley employed straightforward techniques such as scanning the loch bed with a 'fish finder', similar to the equipment used by Henderson in the Lake of Menteith (Henderson: 1995). This approach allowed a fast and inexpensive method of searching for possible submerged islets. Once a site was positively identified by Holley, it was surveyed by a three man team using a total station which expedited work and allowed rapid data acquisition. Divers also examined the site for any surrounding artificial features such as jetties, causeways and boat noosts (small harbours), etc. In total, Holley surveyed some 173 lochs on Coll, Tiree, Mull and Islay, recording 31 confirmed and three possible crannogs. It should also be noted that Holley prefers the term 'crannog' instead of island dun or island dwelling – a difference that has also affected the NMRS totals.

5.2.5 Comments on underwater survey and investigations

While this preliminary form of underwater investigation has real limits in comparison to excavation (i.e. providing a context for the presence of possibly unstratified material), it does allow for a rapid examination of the immediate area surrounding island dwellings which can reveal submerged surface finds or environmental data which survives largely intact in waterlogged environments. Additionally, basal dimensions, loch depth and any subsidence of the islet which may have occurred can be noted as long as divers avoid stirring up sediments in an environment of already limited visibility. The archaeological return can be substantial in terms of providing both a chronological context to the site and indicating

the artificiality of the islet in question without intrusive action. Amongst other observations underwater fieldwork for my research produced numerous examples of prehistoric pottery lying exposed on the lochbed in a short period of time; this is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Underwater investigations of this nature are vitally important in that they represent the first time archaeologists, or perhaps anyone for that matter, has ever viewed the immediate area surrounding islet dwellings. With the increase of sport diving this further heightens the need for timely archaeological investigations. Although most recreational divers prefer the open-sea, the small percentage of treasure hunters seeking archaeological material would have countless opportunities in the Western Isles based upon my observations. Education is perhaps equally important as the fieldwork itself in preserving the submerged cultural heritage. I strongly believe the submerged cultural heritage in Scotland and Ireland is the largest remaining untapped or understudied reservoir of archaeological data in the British Isles, if not Europe.

5.3 The Hebridean Island Dwelling Tradition from the Neolithic to the Middle Iron Age: Fragmented origins

Although Neolithic lake-villages are well documented in Alpine regions at sites such as Lake Zurich and Lake Neuchatel, they tend to be large, free-standing pile platforms along the foreshore and were perhaps only seasonally 'over water', and were not islands as such. Despite indications that Irish island dwellings may have been free-standing pile dwellings (Cavers 2010:80) there is no convincing evidence published that these structures exist in Scotland. Although some prehistorians are quick to point out the prior existence of Continental lake-villages upon the mention of 'crannogs', their rationale appears quite different and ultimately unrelated to the small, solidly built, single-dwelling islets typically found in Scotland. In a recent overview of European lake-dwellings (Menotti 2004), no mention was even given to wetland settlement in Scotland, underscoring (perhaps unfairly) the fundamental differences (i.e. chronology and typology) between the two areas. To be forthright, Neolithic island dwellings are a rare occurrence in Scotland, with only three known sites comprising a mere 0.052% of the Scottish total. What is most important in a Scottish context, is that all three are located in the Western Isles: two on North Uist (Eilean an Tighe; Eilean Domhnuill) and one on Lewis (Pygmie's Isle).

5.3.1 Pygmie's Isle

Pygmie's Isle, Butt of Lewis (NB56 NW4) is included in this thesis with the caveat that it represents a drastic departure from those islets typically found in this thesis, with the only exceptions being a handful of similarly situated islets: Dun Airnestean, Lewis and to a lesser degree, Dun Mhic Laitheann near North Uist. Pygmie's Isle (fig.5.5) is an exposed, windswept sea stack, very difficult of access, at the extreme northern tip of the Isle of Lewis; a harsh, yet unequivocally dramatic and alluring setting for any type of structure, yet is included in this discussion as it contains evidence of Neolithic use (fig. 5.5). The island currently measures some 45 x 67m, although untold erosion has occurred since the Neolithic Period. Extensive antiquarian digging on Pygmie's Isle yielded foundations of an Early Christian chapel - the primary focus of efforts by MacKenzie, who regarded the finds overall as 'disappointing' (MacKenzie 1905: 250). Although an untold number of sherds were recovered within what appear to be occupation levels and subsequently lost, the single illustrated sherd was readily recognised as Neolithic Unstan ware by later reviewers (Beveridge 1911: 221-222; Armit 1996: 50-52; Henderson 1998:239).

What would motivate people to occupy this exposed site, with one of the highest *average* UK wind-speeds[8] in excess of 10m/s is unknown, but the motivations do not appear to be framed within a simple domestic context. Pygmie's Isle received its name from a rather bizarre local tradition that leprechauns inhabited the site while the early traveller Dean Munro (Munro 1549) recorded local accounts of Irishmen making the great journey to collect their highly sought-after bones. The point of this narrative is that in order to determine the legitimacy of this story, MacKenzie (1905) sent off the faunal remains which were recovered alongside the Neolithic pottery (*ibid* 256) for identification. The results indicated seven different species of mammal (no leprechauns unfortunately), including oxen, both lambs and adult sheep and a possible fox, while seven species of seabird were identified – a food source also exploited at Eilean Domhnuill, below. It is hard to concede that oxen, among the other species of mammals, were brought to the site without great effort, even if slaughtered elsewhere, which hints of alternative explanations beyond simple subsistence activities. The much later construction of an early Christian cell is further suggestion that the dramatic location was

[8] http://www.bwea.com/noabl/ 'RenewableUK is the trade and professional body for the UK wind and marine renewables industries.' as of 11-08-2011.

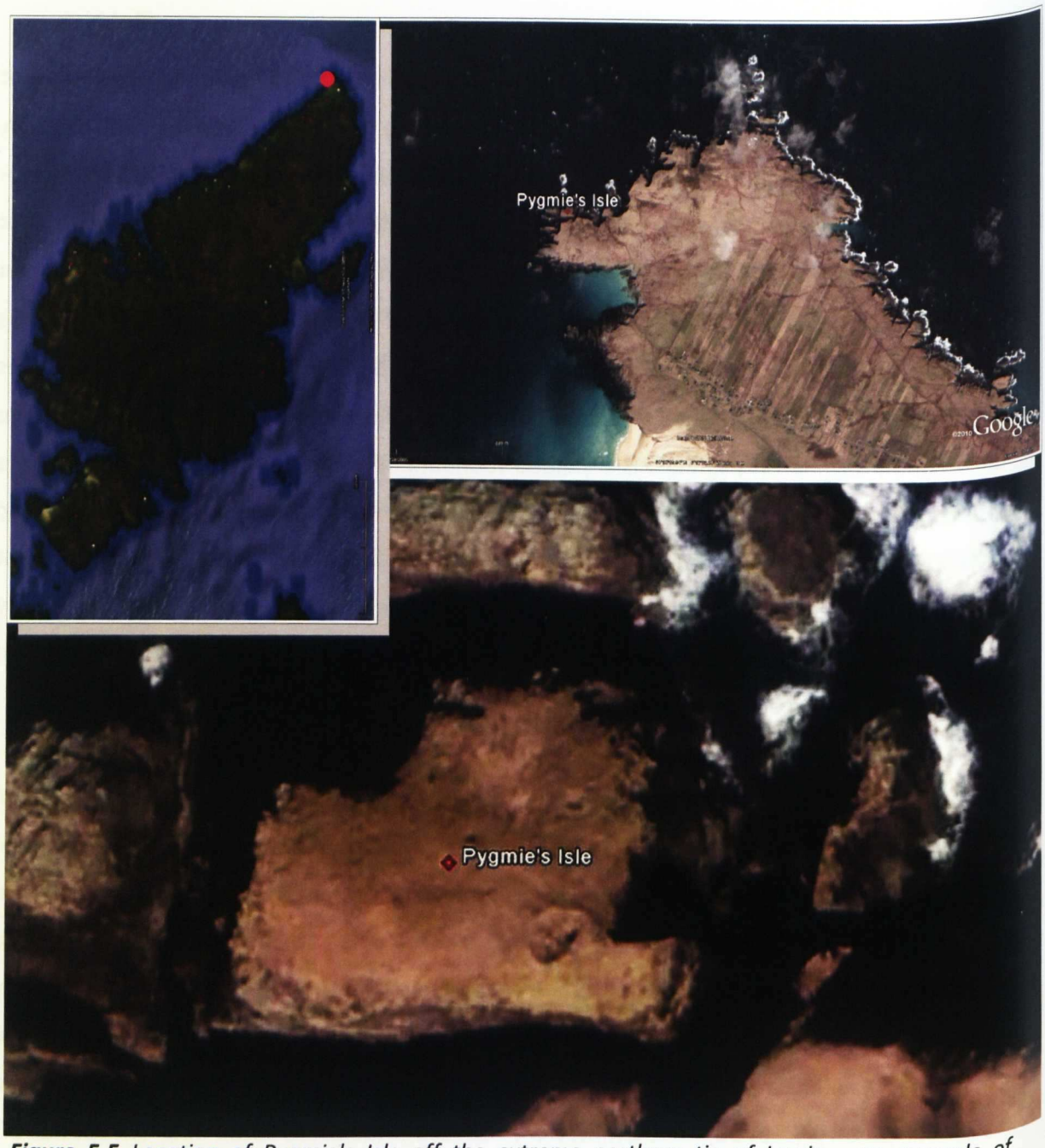


Figure 5.5 *Location of Pygmie's Isle off the extreme northern tip of Lewis – an example of symbolic over practical concerns in creating 'a sense of 'place' in the landscape.*

likely the setting for some type of ritual activity during the Neolithic Period, and had little to do with defence. When the site was visited in 2010, it was not possible to access it. Doing so would have incurred considerable risk without climbing equipment. It remains possible that the site was still connected to the mainland five millennia ago given the impact of weathering and erosion in this hyperactive environment, although it is fairly certain that later monastic use of the site occurred when Pygmie's Isles stood in a similar condition to the present.

Although this site is on the very margin (both figuratively and literally) of what one might consider an island dwelling, the presence of Neolithic pottery and later structures associated with the early Christian church, along with Irish 'pilgrimages' to gather bones, indicates the long legacy of use invested into what can be truly considered a liminal places in the landscape.

5.3.2 Eileann an Tighe

Returning to a more familiar loch setting (fig. 5.6), Eileann an Tighe (NF87 NW1) or 'House Island' exists today as a natural, irregularly shaped islet in Loch Geireann on North Uist measuring approximately 40 by 12m (fig.). It first drew the attention of Erskine Beveridge, who noted the presence of upstanding remains of several linear drystone foundations that appeared to be of varying age (Beveridge 1911: 222). What caught Beveridge's attention however, were numerous 'fragments of pottery... nearly all of these showing patterns in great variety' (ibid: 222), later identified by Graham Callender as 'Western Neolithic Pottery' (Callender 1928: 86). A small stone adze, six flint scraper and several spherical hammerstones were also discovered. The presence of a possible causeway from the larger island of Ard Reamhar was noted by Beveridge extending towards Eileann an Tighe. In the late 1940s, Lindsay Scott returned for further excavations (Scott 1950). He noted that the loch level was raised in the late 18th century when a grist mill was constructed at the northern end of the loch (ibid: 1). Scott was also aware of the implications of changing loch levels, having previously determined that the climate was drier in antiquity as his earlier excavations of Neolithic sites at Clettreval and Unival did not contain layers of peat below them. He also indicated that suspected pottery kilns on Eilean an Tighe used birch, hazel and willow – species that had not existed here for a considerable amount of time. He carried out soundings between Eileann an Tighe and Ard Reamhar and discovered that the loch depth did not exceed 2m. Scott's observations regarding sea-level rise in the area since the Neolithic appear to closely match modern frameworks, while indicating in antiquity the islet would have been accessible from the sea by small watercraft, passing several burial cairns along the way; he finally notes that the occupation appears to be largely submerged (ibid: 3). Finds included Neolithic pottery fragments from an estimated 365 vessels (Scott 1950:24) amidst a 'pottery workshop' with additional evidence of multi-period occupation containing three superimposed hearths lying under two rectilinear structures of an unknown date

'substantially later than the Neolithic' (Armit 1996: 50). As the pottery was found both near the shore and slightly below the water level, a strong potential for underwater investigation exists and Eileann an Tighe is currently a priority for post-doctoral research.

5.3.3 Eilean Domhnuill

Perhaps the most influential Neolithic site in regards to this discussion is the artificial islet of Eilean Domhnuill (fig. 5.7) or *Eilean Domhnuill a' spionnaidh*, 'Donald's Island of strength' in Loch Olabhat, North Uist (NF77 NW3). As with most sites on North Uist, it was first investigated by Beveridge who noted the presence of several rectangular structures overlying earlier midden ash and quantities of patterned pottery (Beveridge 1911: 198). Little else transpired until the site was re-excavated by Ian Armit in the late 1980s. A full excavation report is forthcoming yet several summary articles have been published (Armit 1987; 1988; 1992a; 1996; 2003; *forthcoming*). Excavation revealed rectangular drystone foundations of at least three successive Neolithic drystone houses whose foundations were largely contiguous and measured some 6x4m internally (Armit 2003: 94). He places these c.3600BC although ^{14}C data is forthcoming. Underwater trial trenches revealed earlier strata which pre-date the structures, and it is surmised that a rapid sequence of flooding and rebuilding took place during the first of the substantial occupation phases represented at the site (*ibid:* 95). The site 'biography' appears to be a troubled one, an indicator of the persistent nature of the occupants to remain here. At one stage the islet is completely flooded, abandoned for a considerable amount of time, and then as it re-emerged from the waters, was rebuilt and once again occupied (*ibid:* 95). In sum, no less than 20,000 sherds of Unstan and Hebridean ware were recovered along with carved stone balls, pumice net floats for fishing[9] and a number of saddle querns while organic layers produced evidence of wattle screens and faunal remains. The notion of the islet as a typical domestic site is challenged by Armit who cites a lack of evidence for the working of materials or the keeping of livestock (no dung) on the site, along with the fact it was fastidiously maintained from c.3650BC-2600BC despite repeated flooding. Therefore, he tentatively suggests a ritual purpose running in tandem with marginally domestic activities (*ibid*: 99). Although the true nature of the site may never be fully understood, it does stand to reason that functions beyond that of

[9]Volcanic pumice has been found on several Neolithic sites in the Western Isles, originating from Iceland. The stone floats well and excavations from Alt Chrisal on Barra have also unearthed Neolithic use of pumice for fishing nets, replete with grooves where cordage has marked the forgiving nature of the stone (Branigan & Foster 2002: 34).

Figure 5.6 *Eileann an Tighe. Much of the Neolithic settlement margins are now submerged.*

a simple domestic homestead were acted out here. The location of the loch some 400m from the sea, at only a few metres above sea level, indicates the precarious nature of investing labour resources into what amounts to a small mound of stone in a loch. Rebuilding along the foreshore, if not further inland, would make much more sense from a functionalist standpoint, especially in light of the repeated episodes of flooding alluded to by Armit. In addition, this site may reveal valuable information in regards to sea-level change over the past five millennia, a topic which has direct implications for future searches for submerged archaeological landscapes in the Western Isles, be they inland or at sea.

5.3.4 Discussions on pre-Iron Age islet use in the Western Isles

The presence of only three islets with Neolithic material in the Western Isles might be casually dismissed as independent anomalies, yet Eileann an Tighe is only located 8km east of Eilean Domhnuill; inter-accessibility is easy along the coast or by sea. If the latter saw

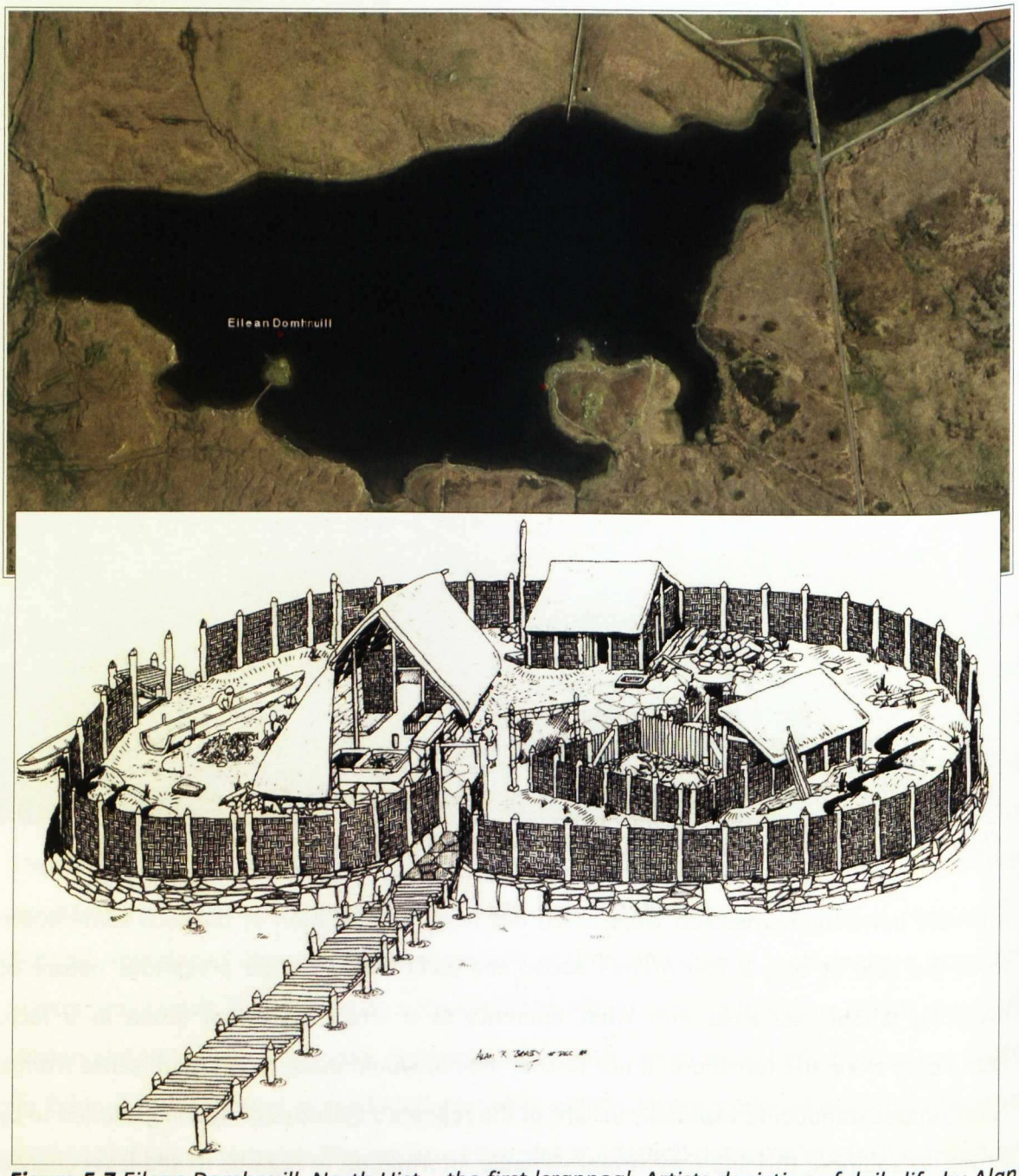


Figure 5.7 *Eilean Domhnuill, North Uist – the first 'crannog'. Artists depiction of daily life by Alan Braby, below.*

occupation over roughly one millennia, then it stands to reason that occupation at the two sites overlapped at some point. In addition, if Scott's interpretation of Eileann an Tighe as a pottery manufacturing sites hold true, then this may explain the origin of at least some of the substantial amount of Neolithic pottery from Eilean Domhnuill. It is highly probably that additional Neolithic islets will be discovered in the Western Isles in the future, especially

from areas such as the largely inaccessible Loch Scadavay, where the complicated and irregular water channels hold numerous small islets that have not been examined – a lengthy task indeed. A conversation in 2010 with the North Uist estates manager George MacDonald, a keen walker who has an intimate knowledge of the area, indicated the presence of probable Neolithic pottery or surface material around the margins of the loch which have not yet been recorded. Currently, Eilean Domhnuill is the earliest example of artificial islet in Scotland by at least 1500 years and chronologically rivals the earliest Continental lake-villages. Whether or not the creation of an artificial islet was initially intentional will remain unknown, yet their desire to continue living here prompted the consolidation of the islet using imported materials to sidestep the rising waters. As Armit indicates, 'Whatever else the site was, Eilean Domhnuill was *important* and *permanent*' [his emphasis] (ibid: 98).

Despite these promising Neolithic finds, the continuity of islet use is not at all apparent in the Bronze Age record of the Western Isles in the exact same way mainland use is non-existent until the very cusp of the Early Iron Age. If anything, Hebridean sites do not have the strength of evidence for early first millennium BC occupation due to the general lack of radiocarbon dates for Hebridean islets. The earliest Iron Age date comes from Dun Bharabhat (GU-2436) which returns a wide one sigma determination between 811 and 518 cal. BC (fig. 5.8), while the near-by neighbour of Berigh, Riof did not produce any dates from the first millennium BC. Therefore we are left with little in the way of absolute dates for Early Iron Age activity on Hebridean islets. Although this can be partially blamed on lack of dating programmes, it still remains somewhat surprising given the intensity with which islets were used here in prehistory. This is one example where mainland island dwellings with timber structures may hold an advantage when attempting to employ absolute dating strategies. If the date for the deforestation of the Western Isles can be pinned down with greater precision, this may allow research to narrow the onset of completely stone islets with greater confidence. At any rate, Bronze Age activity for the time being appears to have moved either to the machairs, as at Cladh Hallan (Parker Pearson *et* al. 2004) or perhaps to more interior areas which have remained largely unoccupied since the Bronze Age – a period of warmer, drier weather. Later climatic decline appears to have rendered the interior less attractive for settlement since the late second/early first millennium BC – a

possible influence upon the decision to expand into lochs with great abandon throughout Atlantic Scotland. It therefore stands to reason a clearly bounded landscape such as North Uist would archaeologically reveal the effects of climate marginalisation more strongly than the mainland where displaced groups stood a much better chance of locating unoccupied land that was still viable for a mixed pastoral/agricultural economy.

5.4 Iron Age island dwellings in the Western Isles

Only two Hebridean island dwellings have been excavated down to initial occupation levels at a modern standard: Dun Vulan (Parker Pearson *et al.* 1999) and Eilean Domhnuill (Armit 2003). Despite this, one of the main advantages of drystone architecture for archaeologists is the degree of structural preservation for upstanding remains. Unless quickly submerged, timber structures on mainland islets rapidly deteriorate, hence the lack of upstanding structural detail for mainland crannogs. However, interpreting drystone remains is not always a case of simply walking over the site. Material on Hebridean islets ranges from amorphous mounds of looted rubble overlain with peat, to largely intact Atlantic roundhouses (i.e. brochs), cellular structures, duns and wheelhouses. The reuse of drystone structures on islet sites can indicate changes in architectural styles as the older footprint of earlier structures typically remain intact below later modification sequences which become apparent during excavation. Dun Ban, Grimsay, Dun an Sticer and Berigh, Riof exemplify this dynamic with later insertions or modifications of the initial architecture – this is discussed below and in Chapter 6.

5.4.1 Dun Bharabhat, Cnip (NB03 NE4)

Two islet-based Atlantic roundhouses have been excavated to a high standard in recent years as part of the aforementioned Callanish Archaeological Research Project (Harding and Dixon 2000). Dun Bharabhat (fig. 5.9) lies approximately 1km from the coast in a relatively small loch measuring approximately 100x200m. The structure, which was in ruins due to

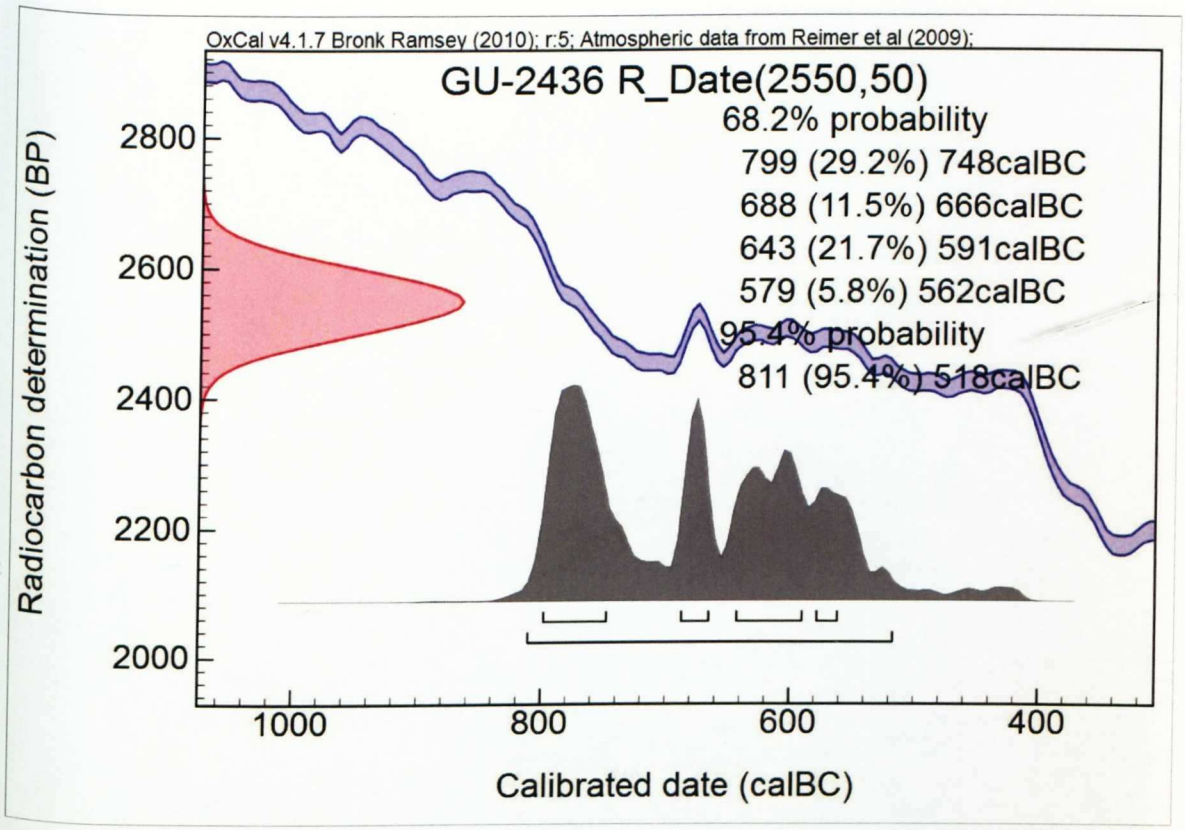


Figure 5.8 *Radiocarbon date from Dun Bharabhat, Lewis.*

robbing or quarrying of the stone, is a complex Atlantic roundhouse which initially contained five galleries. This included a small 'guard cell' near the entrance which faced in the opposite direction of the causeway – a typical layout for this period (Harding and Dixon 2000: 4). The orientation of the entrance 180° from the causeway would have created an impression of strength when viewed from the shore due to the featureless and imposing nature of the structure. This orientation also correlates to a preference for a south-east or due east facing entrance amongst Iron Age roundhouses (Oswald 1997: 87), although a small handful of sites such as Dun Carloway spurn this convention with a north-west facing entrance opening directly into prevalent weather patterns (Harding and Dixon 2000:69; Parker-Pearson *et al.* 2004: 89).

Despite the small size of the loch and location near the shore, Dun Bharabhat would have had a highly controlled means of accessing the roundhouse. First one would have to ascend a steep hill which rises 34m above the beach, then negotiate the causeway and finally the

Figure 5.9 *Aerial photo of Dun Bharabhat.*

gangway. This is only if outsiders are aware that the site is present, as the loch is hidden from view. The only vantage point is a knoll which rises up to 65m OD, located 220m S of the loch which provides views across both the open Atlantic and Loch Rog, the sea loch extending inland SW of Dun Bharabhat. This location indicates that defensive considerations perhaps played an equally important role as monumentality in the initial construction of Dun Bharabhat. The later construction of nearby Berigh is in a more accessible location which suggests any defensive priorities amongst the local community became more relaxed, or were offset by the continued use of Dun Bharabhat upslope and completely hidden from view.

Dun Bharabhat was occupied in two main phases, the first having come to an end when subsidence of the mound and partial collapse of the Atlantic roundhouse occurred (Harding and Dixon 2000: 4, 13). This subsidence created a number of large repair issues for the re-

occupiers, as the causeway and several of the cells were either demolished or heavily obscured under rubble. This willingness to reinvest in the site perhaps reveals several possible motives. First, the need to rebuild quickly as main occupation may have been a temporary camp on the foreshore or perhaps tightly clustered living conditions in the remaining sections of the structure. There is also evidence for external cellular structures associated with the main building, although the lack of archaeological evidence precludes the nature of these although the presence of hearths butted against the walling may have indicated the need for better ventilation than that afforded by the main hearth (*ibid*: 20-22). Based upon radiocarbon dates returned from Dun Bharabhat, Harding therefore conservatively determines that the site was constructed in the mid-first millennium BC; from sample GU-2436 a *terminus post quem* of 811-518 cal. BC can be extrapolated at the 95.4% probability range (*see* fig. 5.8; appendix 1; Harding and Dixon 2000:26; Armit 1992: 26). Although Dun Bharabhat went through at least one phase of reconstruction after structural failure, the final phase ends when fire appears to have destroyed a timber roof just prior to abandonment. This initial phase with the numerous associated galleries and the subsequent cellular partition near the entranceway was the most elaborate in regards to the notion of a complex Atlantic roundhouse. This phase also corresponds with the elaborate gangway encircling the site and linking to the causeway. Later phases of use apparently continued into the mid-first millennium AD, indicated by the presence of typologically datable pottery sherds left behind after fire consumed the interior. The presence of complex architectural features is not exceptional at Dun Bharabhat; rather this appears to be the norm for later prehistoric settlement typologies in the Western Isles:

> *This apparent lack of evidence for a simple roundhouse horizon makes it difficult to support the traditional view that solid walled duns were the most common form of site in the Western Isles (Henderson 2007b: 158).*

5.4.2 Berigh, Riof, Isle of Lewis or 'Loch na Berigh' (NGR NB 1035 3525)

Berigh, Riof (RCAHMS 1928, no. 69; Harding and Armit 1987; 1988; 1990a; Armit 1992a, 26-29; 1996:120; Harding and Gilmour 2000, Armit 2003a:66-67; Harding 2004: 262-269) is also located on the Bhaltos peninsula in West Lewis (fig. 5.11), less than half a kilometre east from Dun Bharabhat (fig. 5.13). This islet now lies in marshy, marginal land; prior to

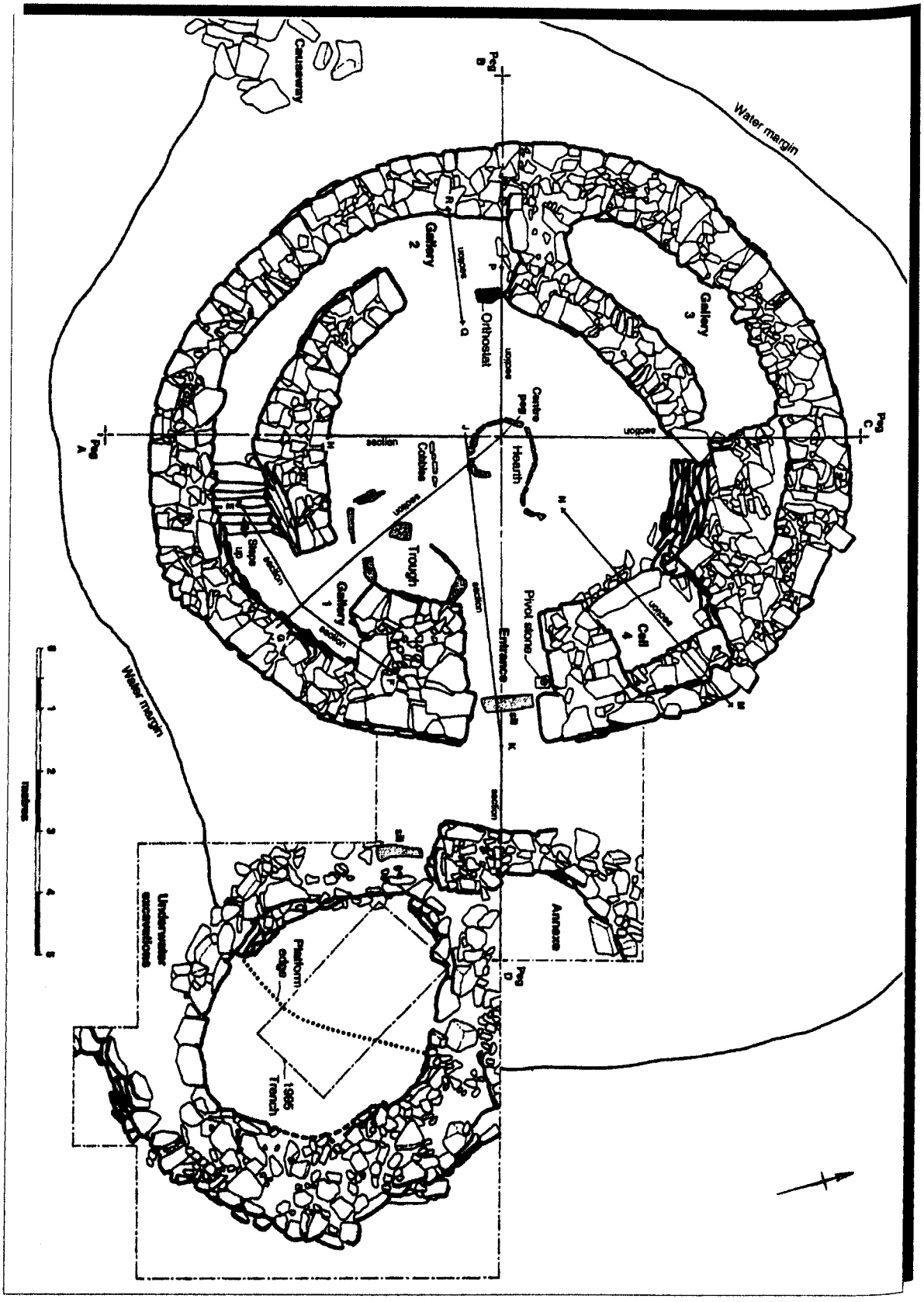


***Figure 5.10** Planview of Dun Bharabhat (Harding & Dixon 2000).*

excavation the loch appears to have silted in largely due to advancing machair. These sand dunes accumulated due to the surrounding hills which effectively prevented windblown sand from advancing inland. Berigh was then subsequently covered with blanket peats which grew atop the sands preserving ground floor galleries – this appears to have occurred during the later phases of occupation. This continually raised the water level precariously close to occupation levels which have provided archaeologists with favourable conditions for organic survival. Life for the superstructure (18m dia./86m^2 internally) started out as a classic broch or complex Atlantic roundhouse considerably larger than the internal area of Dun Bharabhat (11m.dia./23.7m^2); this obviously is dependent upon the limitations of the basal size and strength of foundations at the site is built upon a natural islet. Berigh later developed into a cellular structure within the remains of the original multi-storied broch tower in the first millennium AD; abandonment appears to have occurred sometime around the early Norse period towards the end of the first millennium AD (Harding and Gilmour 2000:85).Excavations at Berigh revealed no less than 12 phases of modification (fig.5.12) spread across 3 phases of occupation according to the excavators, ultimately terminating in a 'final Pictish period' (Harding and Gilmour 2000: 4-7). In this sequence, the site was initially interpreted as having seven separate galleries ranging from over ten metres to approximately two metres in length, although by the time the final report was published in 2000 the number had dropped to 5 with two having 'corbelled galleries' (Harding and Armit 1990:97; Harding and Gilmour 2000:7, 69). The Atlantic roundhouse was gradually altered by the addition of capstones over the galleries and the construction of cellular divisions within the main court. It should be noted that Berigh during its broch sequence had relatively thin walls at just over 1 metre in width when compared to other complex Atlantic roundhouses; this may have contributed to structural weaknesses that resulted in the reuse of the original outer wall material for the cellular architecture after the collapse of the upper walling (ibid 2000: 80). This might appear at first to represent a step backwards in complexity or perhaps a response to the maintenance demands of the structure, yet it can equally reflect changing social identities or preferences in the internal layout of the site. The idea of 'downgrading' from a complex broch tower to an initially simpler form has been interpreted as an attrition of technological skill, although I would strongly disagree with this. Opinions remain divided:

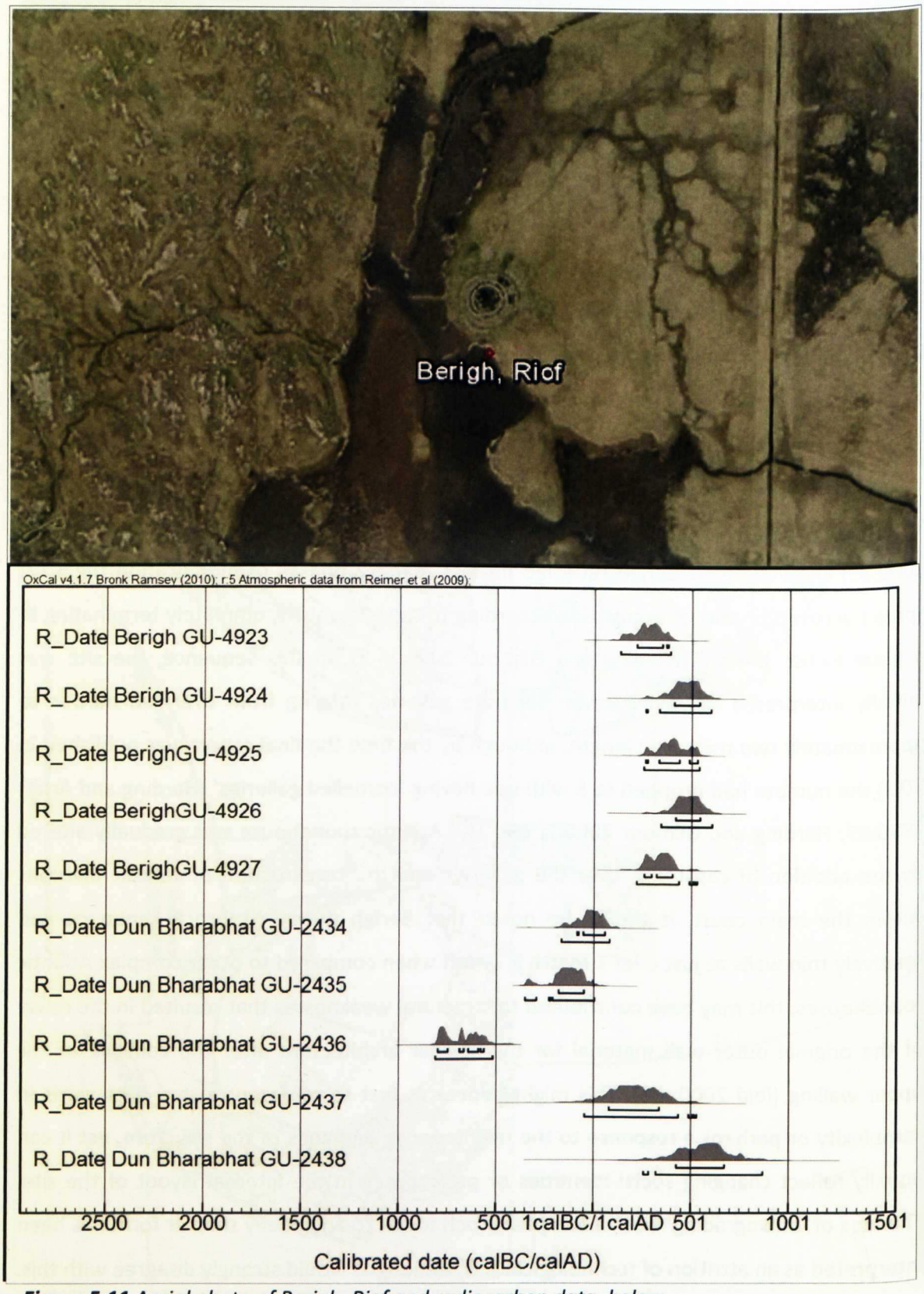


Figure 5.11 *Aerial photo of Berigh, Riof and radiocarbon data, below.*

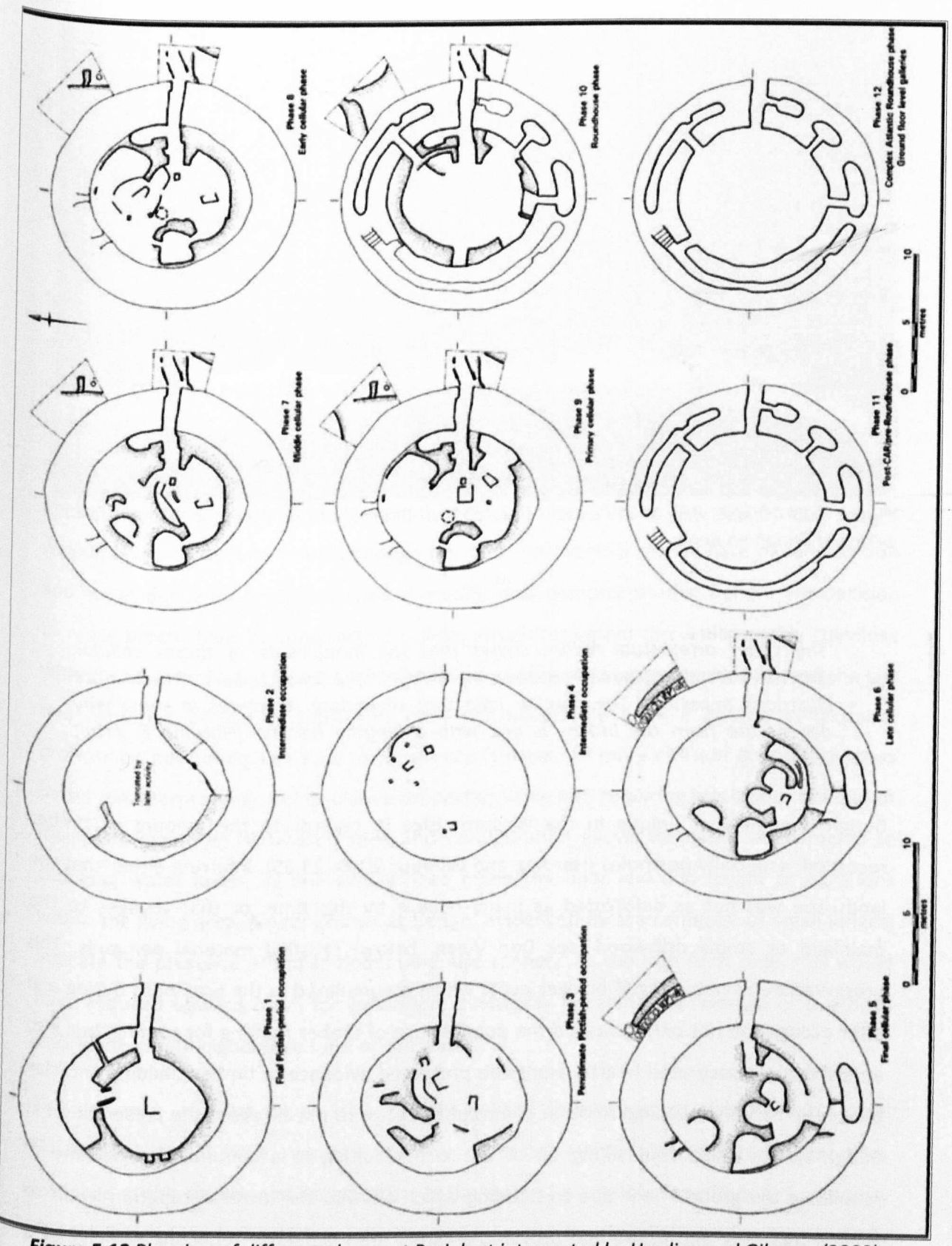


Figure 5.12 *Planview of different phases at Berigh at interpreted by Harding and Gilmour (2000).*

Figure 5.13 *Oblique view of the closely situated Dun Bharabhat and Berigh in relation to the beach at Traigh na Berie.*

> *'The wider artefactual record shows that the inhabitants of theses cellular structures were not squalid peasants squatting in the fallen towers of their more illustrious ancestors. The popular idea that secondary structures in some way degenerate from the brochs is one with a lengthy history' (Harding & Armit 1990:107).*

Berigh is somewhat unique in the Western Isles in regards to the amount of timber recorded, especially postholes (Harding and Gilmour 2000: 23,85), inferring either that the landscape was not as deforested as many believe by this time, or that voyages to the mainland or ample driftwood (*see* Dun Vulan, below) satisfied material demands. This preservation by waterlogged blanket peats which accumulated in the area both during and after occupation not only indicated the possible use of timber framing for roofing, but also an elaborately decorated hearth, alongside preserved evidence of timber cladding and clay plaster on the inner walling. Another contributing factor to the excellent site preservation at Berigh was the apparent silting up of the loch resulting in a continual programme of rebuilding the ground floor due to flooding which allowed the lower occupation levels to remain relatively untouched and provided a rarely seen sequence reflecting the changing tastes of the inhabitants in regards to their domestic surroundings. As Harding states in regards to the high preservation of environmental evidence at Berigh:

> *Atlantic roundhouse studies have hitherto been based upon the anatomy of their stone construction; here is a real prospect that the anatomy can be given flesh and clothed as it must have formerly been' (ibid:61).*

Radiocarbon dates from Berigh in the form of charcoal and carbonised grain have yielded dates from a rather narrow range over phases[10] 10-5 ranging from 120-400 cal. AD (GU-4923) to 340-610 cal. AD (GU-4926) revealing a prolific, if not hectic, period of constant modification and continual occupation (fig. 5.11). Indeed, artefactual assemblages in the form of brooches, a thistle headed pin, tweezers and composite combs push the final occupation into the Norse interlude (*ibid*: 66). Despite Berigh and Dun Bharabhat being the only island based Atlantic roundhouses excavated to modern standards, the radiocarbon dates returned from the sites have rolled back the constructional horizons from what was traditionally considered the beginnings of complex Atlantic architecture on islets. This has implications for the typological dating of island duns surveyed in the past through visible walling and architectural traits, although this only represents a single phase of construction and not evidence for multiple phases of modification demonstrated at Berigh. The decision to reuse broch shells by constructing cellular structures within the walls roughly coincides with the advent of wheelhouses, which Armit describes as having appeared around the last two centuries BC (1996: 135). This does not necessarily mark a decline in technical proficiency, but perhaps a desire to construct a 'smarter' or more efficient dwelling that has better weatherproofing and insulative properties while also requiring less labour to build or maintain. Regarding islet-based sites, this configuration allows for easier adjustments to changing water levels, as one simply need reline the floor and add height to partitions within the living area. Earlier phases at Berigh, evidenced by scarcements, or small ledges, indicate the presence of upper floors (and also timber). As the loch level rose, this would have reduced upward room for expansion, eventually necessitating removal of overhead flooring to create higher levels out of the water.

The dynamics of living on an islet in lochs subject to seasonal or climatic water level fluctuations would have required adaptive processes unique to most terrestrial sites. Evidence of this situation at Berigh exists in the form of a possible superimposed causeway due to silting of the loch which greatly impacted the constructional sequences due to widely

[10] It should be noted that when viewing the sequences Harding and Gilmour use phase 1 as the newest and 12 as the oldest.

variable water levels. As Harding and Gilmour state: 'At the time of its initial construction and occupation, the complex Atlantic roundhouse at Berigh must have been surrounded by an extensive dune slack, allowing access only by means of a causeway from the west or by boat across the loch' (2000: 1) Indeed, the surviving, visible causeway at Berigh is a post-roundhouse addition as it sits approximately 2 metres above the original occupation level (Henderson, *pers. comm*). Berigh is particularly indicative of possible sea level rise affecting the re-use of the site; Harding points out that 'in the Western Isles sea-level rise since the Neolithic has been estimated as being up to 5 metres' (2004:9). However, the processes of isostatic uplift can be difficult to apply to specific areas though it is accepted that sea levels has risen an appreciable amount since human occupation of the Western Isles (Benjamin; *forthcoming*) A notable aspect of Berigh is its location, overshadowed by steep hills (discussed in relation to Dun Bharabhat, above) along the western edge of the loch. Berigh lies close to arable ground as one moves towards the sea and would have allowed decent, though not lofty, views over Traigh na Berigh[11] (Armit 1992a: 27). Harding and Gilmour also point out that the surrounding hills conceal it from easy view within the surrounding landscape. The location is within a cirque or 'bowl' which opens towards the beach and sheltered sea access.

5.4.3 Dun Vulan, South Uist (NF72 NW1)

Beginning in 1987, an intensive project began in the form of the Sheffield Environmental and Archaeological Research Campaign in South Uist and Benbecula (SEARCH), a multi-discipline campaign in under-surveyed areas of South Uist and Barra culminating in the excavations at Dun Vulan (Duin Bhulan), South Uist (Parker-Pearson and Sharples 1999). Dun Vulan's location is difficult to neatly categorise as it formerly occupied a natural tidal islet which now occupies a thin strip of land between the neighbouring loch and the open sea (fig.5.14). In complete contrast to the largely hidden sites of Dun Bharabhat and Berigh, Dun Vulan occupies a prominent location along the expansive west coast beaches of South Uist and the location was visible along the beach for several kilometres when visited in 2009. Discreetness in regards to passing boats was not a consideration, and seems to imply exactly the opposite, an open invitation to stop and perhaps barter at the shore while the presence of an imposing broch would indicate that the occupants controlled the area.

[11]'Berigh Beach' in *Gaelic*

Prompted by heavy coastal erosion to the south and road construction to the north the site was salvaged starting in 1992 and was considered a 'flagship' Iron Age site for the programme's objectives. Excavations produced large amounts of worked faunal remains in the form of red deer bone and antler in addition to 19,000 sherds of pottery, leather, several glass beads, lithics, a single iron blade and organics which resulted in the publication of a detailed excavation report resulting in the most comprehensive to date of a Hebridean Iron Age Atlantic roundhouse and its context within the surrounding landscape. The construction level of the Atlantic roundhouse was tentatively dated to 2BC-199 cal. AD (AA-13997) as this stems from a single date immediately underneath the broch walling. Outside surrounding the structure, midden deposits dated to as late as 238-412 cal. AD (AA-18148) placing it within the expected time frame for complex broch architecture in a 'pre-Pictish' context (fig. 5.15).

The broch itself is a sub-circular structure measuring some 18m in diameter at its greatest point, 4.5m in total height with an entrance facing due east, broadly in-line with the preference for circular structures in Iron Age Britain (Oswald 1997: 87) forming one of the more substantial brochs in the Western Isles. The area outside the broch was also investigated to assess any midden deposits and associated structures. Investigation of the midden deposits provide particularly important details and traditionally have not been a major research focus on broch excavations, which typically concentrate upon architectural detail and rigorous classification instead. The lowest midden levels revealed considerable amounts of heat-shattered rock, pottery typical of Late Bronze and Early Iron Age forms, organic remains, bone and perhaps most tellingly, wood fragments which indicates an earlier horizon and climate as pollen analysis indicates a later treeless landscape in the immediate environs (Brayshay and Edwards 1996: 15; Parker Pearson *et al.* 2000: 54). This correlates with radiocarbon evidence from the basal area of the midden dating to 761- 406 cal. BC (AA-22916), predating the earliest phase of the broch by several centuries. Importantly this indicates concentrated activity within the site prior to construction of the broch, and therefore weakens the argument for the date of Dun Vulan which hangs on a single determination as older material is present around the site. Evidence for cultivation appears rather sparse which is not surprising considering the exposed coastal location; rather cultivation would have taken place on the inland stretch of machair. Pollen from

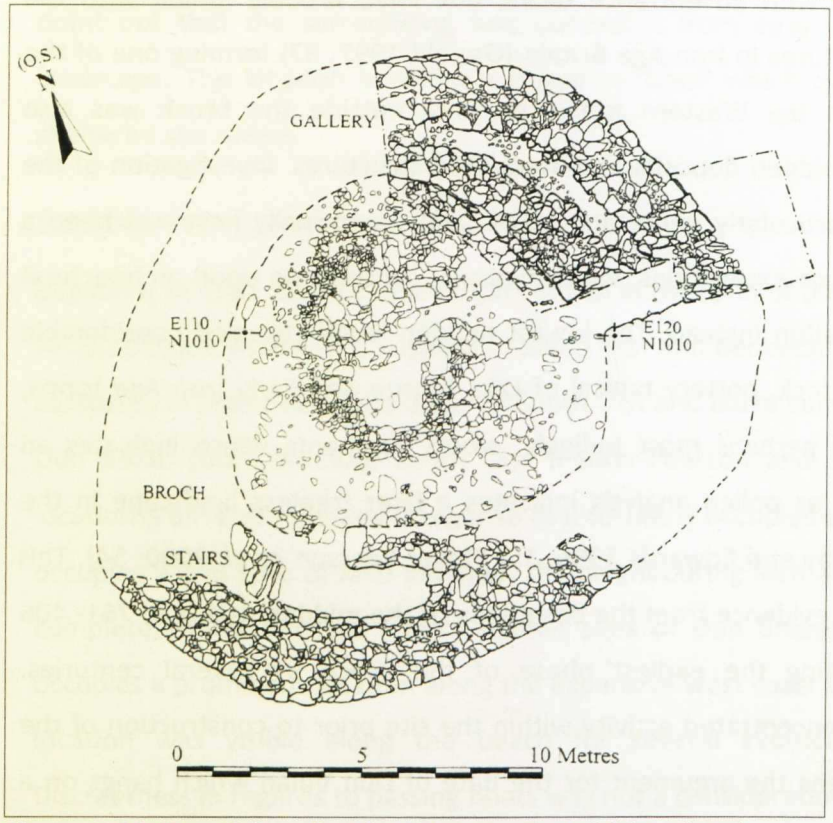


Figure 5.14 *Dun Vulan, South Uist – a coastal islet that is now located on a 'shingle bar' due to erosion. Below- planview (Parker Pearson et al. 1999)*

cereals, most likely barley, was recovered but perhaps was the result of windblown debris from inland plots.

An important point to make in regards to chronology and radiocarbon dating is the usefulness of using grain rather than timber. Grains provides an excellent radiocarbon sample which has only lived for one season, therefore eliminating the 'old wood' problem (*see* 3.4.1). Grains, having only lived for one year, are completely free of any variability when taking radiocarbon determinations. It is difficult to imagine cultivation adjacent to the site, and it has been surmised that the former Iron Age environment was not dramatically different from that of today based upon the native species present. The wood recovered from a water-logged context revealed an 80% proportion of larch, none of which was native to the British Isles; the species found were from North America carried to Scotland by the Labrador Current south, then north with the Gulf Stream and finally the North Atlantic current. North American larch also accounts for some 66% of driftwood on Norwegian beaches indicating the deposition of this species across Atlantic and Scandinavian beaches (Taylor 2000:188). This reliance upon driftwood emphasises the lack of suitable timber in the Outer Hebrides beyond smaller species used for coppicing. Native species from Dun Vulan comprised hazel and alder, the former having narrow tree-rings indicating the tree was struggling to grow in the environment. The presence of hazel also indicates probable harvesting of wood for coppicing near the broch, however sparse it may have been. Coppicing would have been known to those at Dun Vulan as the earliest examples of this practice date to the Neolithic (Taylor 2000: 191).

5.4.4 The Human Remains from Dun Vulan

Human skeletal remains are among the most elusive of finds from islet sites in Scotland – they are better represented in the Irish record, most notably Lagore where 14 disarticulated crania were recovered (Hencken 1950: 115; O'Sullivan 1998: 116). Whether this is to do with levels of preservation, the nature of the excavation or the manner and location in which the dead were deposited is a factor that needs to be considered on a site by site basis. Small occupied islets in particular tend to be rocky or artificially constructed in such a way that burial would be a difficult task. I hypothesised above in section 4.3.4 that small islets are an ideal location for the display or handling (not burial) of human remains – perhaps even as excarnation

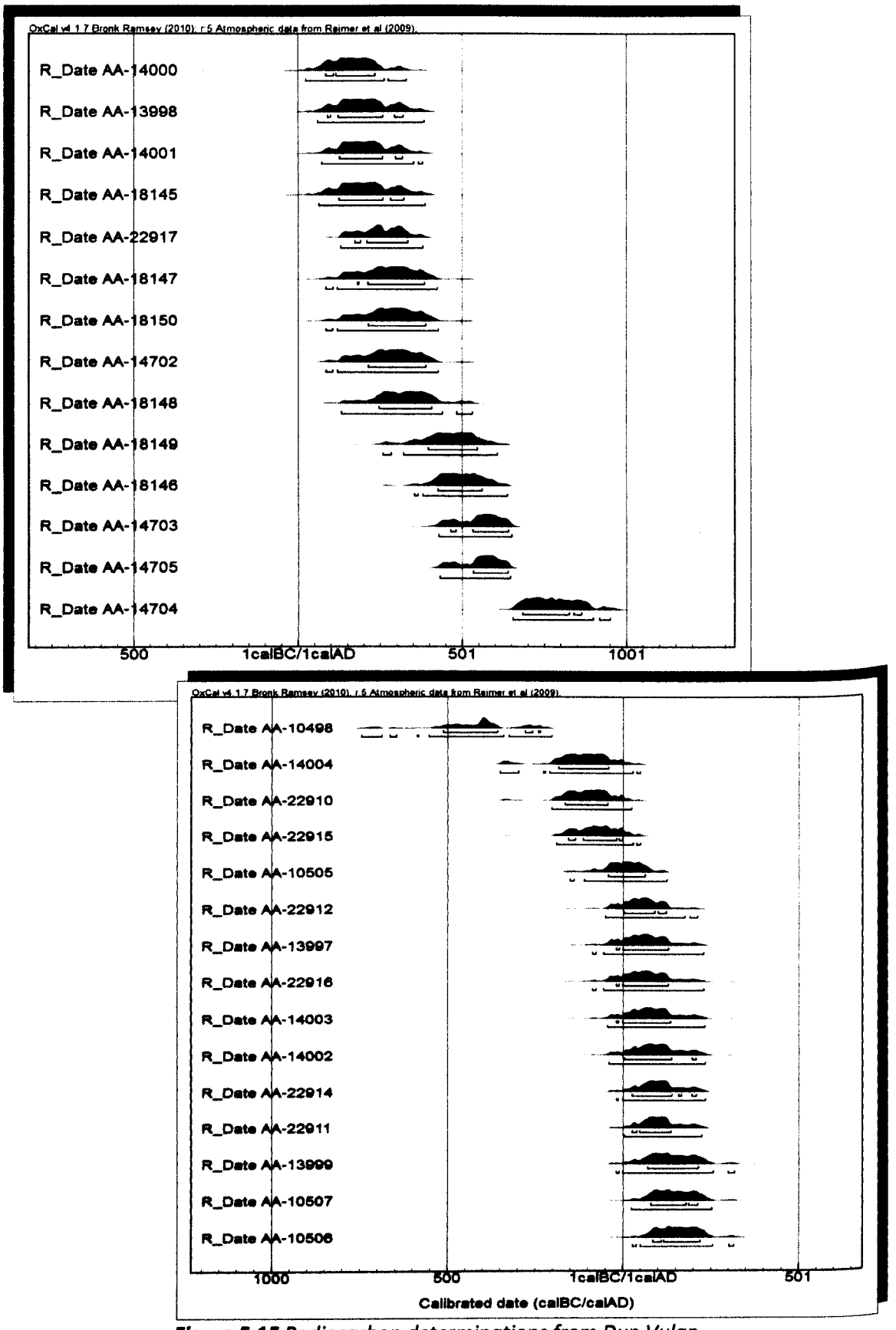


***Figure 5.15** Radiocarbon determinations from Dun Vulan.*

mounds. At Dun Vulan, where the broch rests upon a natural foundation with ample soil and sand, excavation revealed human remains from five different contexts which were found in contexts dating to the early 3rd to early 7th century AD and represent at least three people (Parker Pearson, *et al.* 2000: 288-289). Fragments of a human mandible recovered suggest deliberate deposition in a drain within an adjacent building to the broch (building 'B') while skull fragments were discovered outside in a context dated to 417-565 cal. AD (AA-18146). In building 'A' next to the broch, finger and cranial bones were located in a context stratigraphically lower than one dated to 213-382 cal. AD (AA-18150). As Chamberlain notes, the recovery of disarticulated fragments is not unusual in an Iron Age context, while in addition the distribution indicated likely post-mortem disturbance (*ibid*: 288). Particularly in the Western Isles, it is important to note the association of human skeletal material at Dun Vulan against sites displaying earlier examples of ritual human deposition within dwellings. This phenomenon has been observed for both human and animal remains in several Hebridean Late Bronze and Iron Age contexts. Excavations at nearby Cladh Hallan (Parker-Pearson *et al.* 2004: 62) unearthed a female body that was mummified and interred below the hearth; this has been interpreted as a symbolic offering for continual nourishment (*ibid*: 63) while the presence of burials in the north-west quadrant of each roundhouse strongly indicates a cosmological presence for ritual deposition in the 'dead' winter/night portion of the house furthest away from the sunrise and the entrance, a metaphorical reference to the cyclical phases of life, yearly seasonal progression and daily sunrise/sunset sequences (*ibid*: 22; Fitzpatrick: 1994; Oswald: 1997).

Abandonment of Dun Vulan occurred sometime before 800 AD as deposits of datable material quickly tailed off (Parker Pearson et al. 2000: 197) by which point sporadic use persisted as evidenced by fragments of medieval pottery[12], square nails, copper sheeting and an associated medieval structure near the broch that did not reveal any domestic function. Parker Pearson implicitly states that 'There is no material which is datable to the Viking Period (*ibid:* 196) An interesting aspect to consider is that the ruins of the broch (much) later served as a fisherman's shelter, and was at one point roofed with a large WWII German lifeboat

[12]No description is given but it is probable that the 13th -15th century pottery is, in fact, croghan pottery which has a chronological currency from the 11th to 20th centuries, making it impossible to date without residue analysis or TL dating – not a viable prospect.

which had washed ashore. This highlights the various forms of re-use that can occur in a Hebridean context where materials are at a premium.

5.4.5 Eilean Olabhat

Regarding themes on long-term continuity and change in the island dwelling record, Loch Olabhat ranks highly. As the Neolithic site of Eilean Domhnuill occupies the western margins of the loch, the eastern portion contains another islet of a distinctly different nature – Eilean Olabhat (NF77 NW13), which was also excavated by Armit (1989; Armit, *et al.* 2009). The site now largely exists as a peninsula due to changing loch levels and the encroachment of blanket peats. It is considerably larger (c.60x80m) that it's artificial neighbour Eilean Domhnuill (c.23m/dia.) and is of natural origins although heavily modified with perimeter walling visible in aerial photos (fig 5.16). Dates from the site range from the mid-first millennium BC to the onset of the Norse Period, with later evidence of late Medieval or Post-Medieval re-use (Armit 1989: 35). The earliest construction phase is represented by a small circular stone structure measuring 4x5m internally (Armit *et al.* 2009: 32) and it followed by three more archaeologically discernible phases of use, occurring not as continuous occupation but as largely discreet use. The first and second phases in the second half of the first millennium BC and perhaps early centuries AD appeared to have been without lengthy abandonment. The third phase continues after a 'lengthy' abandonment in the mid-first millennium AD, marked initially by a domestic phase and then by the emergence of considerably metalworking activity on-site until perhaps the 8th century AD (*ibid*: 45). Phase four occurs after yet another lengthy period of disuse as a final isolated phase ending in the 14th to 16th centuries AD. The evidence for metalworking from phase three in the Early Historic Period is notable; 86 mould fragments were recovered while traces of silver were recorded in five crucible fragments (*ibid*:83). There are only a handful of sites which indicate metalworking from this period, including Dunadd (Craw 1930), The Mote of Mark (Laing & Longley 2006), both hilltop and defended settlements, and the Brough of Birsay near Orkney (Curle 1982). As an endnote to the 2003 report by Armit, four sherd of Neolithic pottery were also recovered at Eilean Olabhat, presumably deposited during occupation of the near-by Neolithic islet.

5.4.6 Later prehistoric Material Culture: Pottery

In contrast to the distinct drystone architecture found throughout Atlantic Scotland, later prehistoric material assemblages recovered from this region have largely thwarted attempts at refining a typological sequence. This is an issue of key importance; in a later prehistoric context the concentration of decorated prehistoric pottery from the Western Isles is the highest in Scotland (Lane 1990: 110; Henderson 2007a: 171). At the same time Hebridean pottery is also the least understood of any ceramic tradition in the British Isles. However, examples of diagnostic pottery from the Neolithic to the Norse Period still remain the most accessible way to build relative material typologies. This does not hold true for later forms such as the prolific post-Norse adoption of croghan or 'cragganware' which is virtually indistinguishable from the 11th to 20th centuries. The paucity of later prehistoric pottery on the mainland has prevented it from taking any real part in wider discussions on the appearance of the Atlantic roundhouse tradition. However, after the 2010 field season (Ch. 6) which saw the recovery of largely intact decorated pottery from direct contexts to previously undated Atlantic roundhouses, an acute awareness for the growing potential of prehistoric pottery forms to shed light on dates for associated structures is beginning to be realised. The potential for radiocarbon analysis of residue within these vessels, as at Dun Vulan, above, can also provide a narrow margin of chronological accuracy from which to build more confident typologies. While later prehistoric decorated pottery is the most visible in the Western Isles, in regards to contact and exchange, the distribution is seen to decrease gradually in the Inner Hebrides although it remains comparatively abundant in Caithness, Orkney and Shetland (Henderson 2007a: 171). This indicates at least a cursory relationship amongst the inhabitants of Western Scotland over a long continuum, yet does not imply an identical preference in domestic or material goods, especially considering the south west of Scotland where one finds Atlantic roundhouses but no decorated pottery.

The typological dating of pottery can create specific problems for Hebridean archaeologists. Stylistically, assessments from Dun Vulan have indicated broadly noticeable patterns, namely a transition from coarse, thick undecorated forms during the which perhaps date back to the Late Bronze Age to decorated Middle Iron Age pottery (c.200BC-AD400) and into Late Iron Age styles (c.400-800AD), returning to a coarse undecorated material with everted rims, not unlike the croghan which follows (Parker Pearson 1999: 14). The transition to elaborate motifs in the Middle Iron Age can be seen to roughly coincide with the rise in

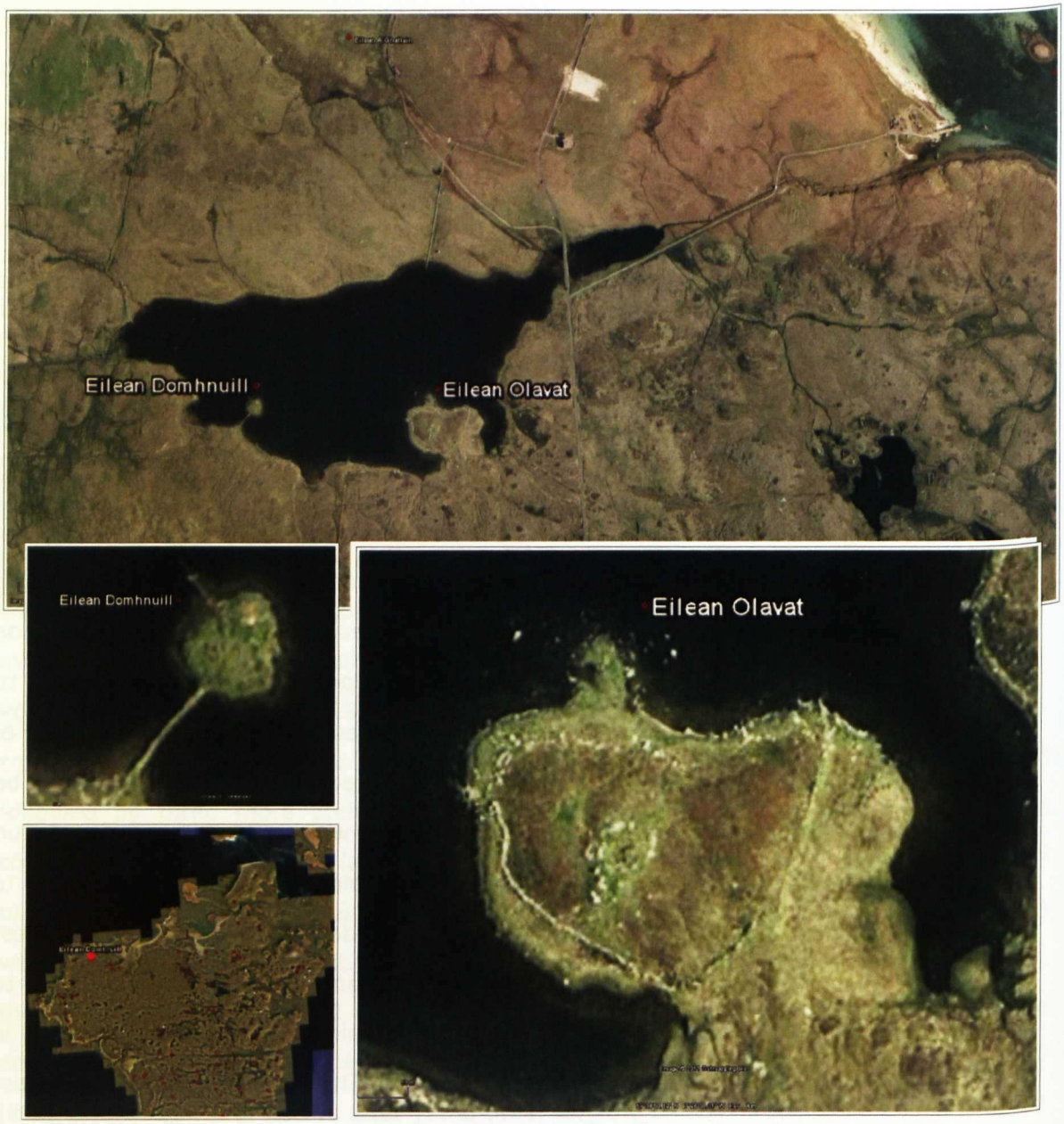


Figure 5.16 *Eilean Olabhat in relation to Eilean Domhnuill.*

monumental architecture during the later centuries BC. Several excavations have produced pottery whose residues have been the subject of ^{14}C dating but the calibration curve has often produced overly wide determinations that are of little use. Examples include Dun Mor Vaul, Tiree (GaK 1096) which calibrates at two sigma to 1625-840BC, a span of almost a millennia (Lane 1990: 114) and Udal, North Uist (Q-1135) which spans a slightly smaller, yet equally unusable range of 780-1390 cal. AD (Lane 1990: 119). While these dates are not at all refined, the evidence from both sites indicate a lengthy occupation span which

corroborates with changing architectural styles from Dun Bharabhat and Berigh, going from a 'pre-broch' to 'monumental' to finally a 'pre-Norse', cellular phase.

5.4.7 Iron Age pottery in relation to Atlantic roundhouses: brochs versus wheelhouses

Although the distribution of prehistoric island dwellings is relatively widespread throughout Atlantic Scotland, the construction of drystone architecture on Hebridean sites along with an abundance of decorated Iron Age pottery allow more discreet cultural comparisons to be made with other areas such as the Inner Hebrides and the North. If taken wholesale as part of an 'Atlantic Scottish continuum' the distribution of decorated pottery largely mirrors the distribution of Atlantic roundhouses (Henderson 2007b: 151, 171). However, the correlation between Iron Age pottery and wheelhouses appears much stronger than that between pottery and the earlier broch forms. Wheelhouses primarily exist in the Western Isles and to a much lesser extent, Shetland, Highland and Orkney[13]; they appear to replace the construction (or maintenance) of elaborate brochs as part of a wider trend towards less outwardly elaborate forms somewhere around the second century AD. These four areas also contain the highest distribution of decorated Iron Age pottery in Scotland. If one examines broch distributions, the presence of Iron Age pottery on these sites does not correlate nearly as strongly as that of wheelhouses.

However, the distribution of Atlantic roundhouses is also much wider that wheelhouses. The diminishing density of Atlantic roundhouses in the south of Scotland is not simply accompanied by a proportionate decrease in decorated Iron Age pottery – rather there is a complete lack. Therefore we see a diffusion of Atlantic roundhouse forms as far east as Edin's Hall in the Scottish Borders which sits within a multi-vallate enclosure alongside multiple associated structures (fig. 5.17). The settlement forms in Galloway such as Stair Haven, Doon Castle, Ardwell Point and Teroy are indeed Atlantic roundhouses yet there is an absence of prehistoric pottery here as well. It is clear then that although robust drystone forms surface outside of an Atlantic Scottish context, their use appears more as a loose adaptation rather than direct cultural affinities with the north and the west. However, the existence of these sites does indicate a level of contact through their emulation. One

[13]There are 31 known or suspected wheelhouses in the Western Isles, while five are known from Shetland, three from the Highlands and one from Orkney (RCAHMS 2011).

possible explanation for this is a desire to maintain regional identities thereby avoiding a 'copycat' use of neighbouring styles which could be interpreted as a loss of identity. This would serve to hypothetically explain why two areas in close geographical proximity, i.e. the Western Isles and Argyll, or Shetland and Orkney, often see contrast between the adoption of pottery or specific forms of architecture, yet overall can be considered within the same overall cultural context. While one must be careful in basing a framework of inter-relationships between island communities solely upon the use of pottery or wheelhouses, the distributions nevertheless point to a degree of autonomy between neighbouring areas.

5.5 The Late Iron Age and Norse Medieval Period: Settlement and society in the first millennium AD in the Western Isles

The 'extended' Iron Age or later prehistory of the Western Isles continues until c. 800AD in comparison to the much earlier terminus for southern Britain through Roman contact although the way of life in both areas remained largely unchanged until the mid-first millennium AD. How insular developments such as settlement and social organisation survived largely unchanged, or more accurately undergoing subtle changes over the centuries, indicates an underlying degree of coherency in Hebridean society until the onset of the Norse Period -the first tangible account of 'foreign' influence on an appreciable scale. What is evident in the settlement record is a diminished preoccupation with constructing monumental dwellings in the latter part of the first millennium AD. Instead, an increase in personal effects such as ornamentation becomes more visible while the spreading influences of Christianity begin to appear around this time as evidenced by bone crosses from Drimore, South Uist (MacLaren 1974). While the Norse undoubtedly had a substantial impact upon the British Isles and indeed much of Atlantic Europe, their legacy in the Western Isles remains arguably the most lasting, creating a Nordic influence on society and settlement forms that soon came to dominate over the 'pictish phases' of later prehistoric settlement, typified by the introduction of 'figure of eight' or 'jellybaby' type cellular drystone structures seen at Berigh (Harding & Gilmour 2000: 14). To what extent we can reliably consider this evidence for Pictish settlement is perhaps one of contention despite the gradual academic abandonment of the Picts being viewed as a largely mysterious, faceless entity in later

prehistoric Scotland (*cf* Laing & Laing 1993; Cummins 1995; Driscoll 2002). Other than a handful of finds containing Ogham script at Bornais, or Bornish, South Uist (Badcock, *et al,* 2008: 30) or Pictish iconography containing distinct symbols as the 'crescent', we are left with relatively little to comment reliable upon the degree and duration of Pictish activity in the Western Isles.

The evidence from a square cist grave, typical of north eastern 'Pictland' at Cille Pheadair (or Peter's Church in *Gaelic*), c. 700AD, indicates settlement by incomers as dental isotope analysis reveals the woman's origins lay outside the Western Isles yet the burial was not Christian indicating that the influence of the early church had yet to arrive (*ibid:* 33). Notwithstanding, dating for the appearance of the Norse in the Western Isles is not as clear-cut in contrast to well-documented incidents such as the attacks on Iona or Lindisfarne. Although this could be due to a paucity of documentary evidence for the Western Isles in comparison to the levels of literacy seen at religious centres to the south and east, it more likely has to do with a lack of 'important' early monastic settlement here. In this manner, the apparent continuity of Iron Age traditions in the Western Isles is perhaps as much a by-product of illiteracy, as much as other more physical factors such as subtleties in settlement and material culture. Perhaps the clearest indicator of Norse settlement is witnessed through the construction of linear dwellings, e.g. the longhouse which came to dominate and later give way to west Highland longhouses and blackhouses. These structures mark a clean break from the circular forms which had remained as the *status quo* for millennia, albeit in various guises and phases.

Another change in settlement that accompanies the Norse arrival is a dramatic downturn in the use of islets – a familiar theme throughout Atlantic Scotland. The archaeological evidence for the earliest examples of Viking settlement in the Western Isles relies upon excavation at three primary sites. The Udal, (fig. 5.18; Crawford & Switsur 1977), Drimore, South Uist (MacLaren 1974) and the Bhaltos Peninsula, or *Valtos,* (Armit *et al,* 1994) have provided the best glimpse into initial Norse settlement. Substantial (though largely unpublished) excavations began at the Udal in the mid-1960s by Iain Crawford (*above* p. 175), which revealed an isolated Norse settlement over Bronze Age burials. Occupation derived from the initial settlement persisted until perhaps the late 17th century, when a major storm

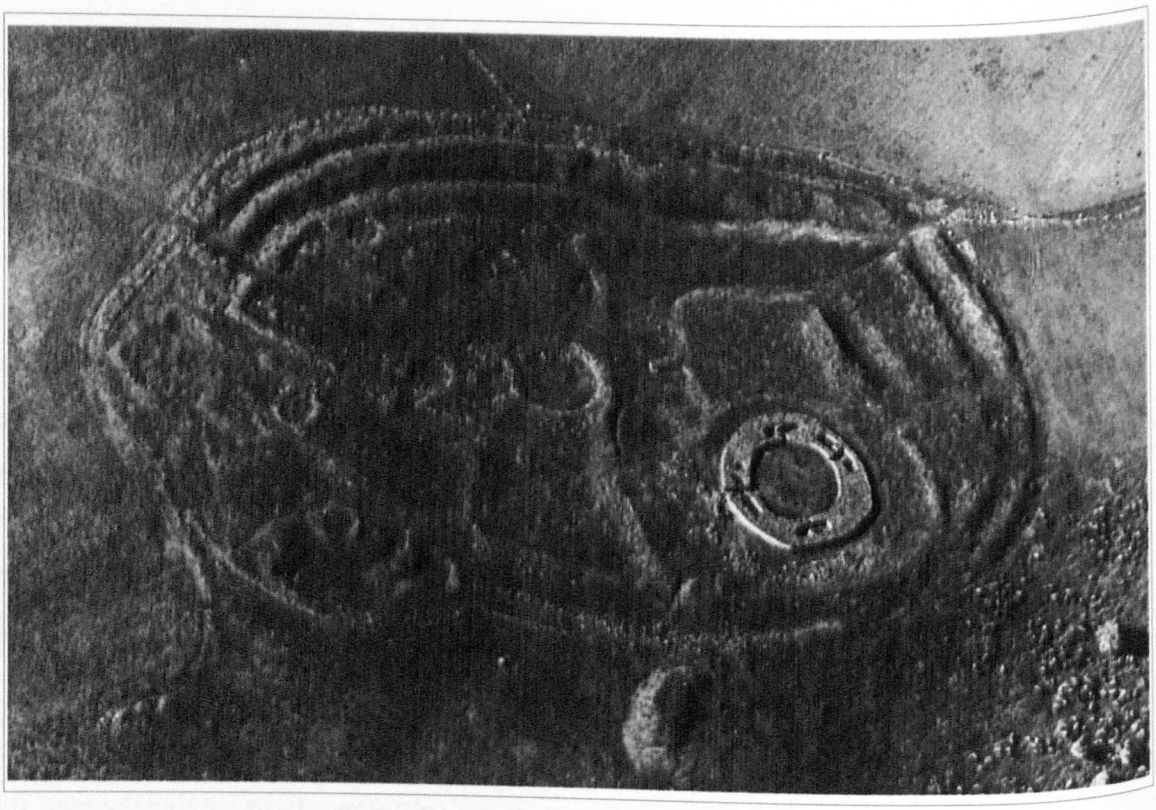


Figure 5.17 *Edin's Hall – a 'southern' broch within an enclosed settlement.*

blanketed the site in sand to such a degree that abandonment shortly ensued. Prevalent as island dwellings are in the Western Isles, these relatively large west coast settlements clearly reaffirm that the Norse were not keen to live on small islands, opting for the fertile machair instead while the presence of earlier structures also indicates that a number of terrestrial prehistoric settlement likely awaits discovery. As shown in the previous chapters, the Norse largely avoided residing on islets, perhaps viewing them as an odd phenomenon despite their seafaring lifestyle which would seem to favour islet settlement, opting instead to create what may be view as the forerunner of the *Baile*, or extended farming communities.

However this hiatus was to give way to another vibrant phase of islet use which re-emerges during the High Medieval Period. People returned to the lochs – although for perhaps different reasons than their prehistoric ancestors. Prehistoric sites such as Dun an Sticer (NF87 NE1; fig. 5.18) made a pronounced revival in the Medieval Hebridean landscape, while several others feature prominently in the Medieval landscape: Dun Raouill, South Uist; Dun Aonais, North Uist; Dun Budhie, Benbecula and Eilean Bheagram, South Uist. Indeed, the use of islets during this period, in the aftermath of Norse assimilation into the Western Isles, is

prolific while island dwellings from this period are commonly perceived as the residences of the emerging 'tacksmen' (*see* 1.7.2) who played a middle ranking role between the upper land-owning classes and the simple rural populous of society, not lairds but instead renting 'tacks' or large farm plots and ensuring the fabric of society remained intact within wider social stratification (Crawford 1983: 356; Raven 2005: 250). This decision to re-inhabit islands can be seen from several different perspectives. The re-occurring theme of 'legitimacy by association' implies a clear degree of power above and beyond that of the lower classes by taking up residence in an ostentatious location which is clearly separate from the rural masses, both physically and conceptually. Given the continual expansion of machairs, the use of islands as domestic foci may also imply the maximisation of what arable land or grazing pasture was available, although in reality this only constitutes a small percentage of the entire tack. This in turn strengthens the view that islands were used largely as indicators of status while the ever-present inherent defensive characteristics were perhaps an added bonus, whether protecting from roaming maritime 'freebooters' or prolific internecine violence, personal vendettas and petty raids.

This is exemplified by the local traditions surrounding Dun an Sticer, whose 16th century occupant, Hugh, son of Archibald MacDonald, plotted to murder the Chief of the MacDonalds (6.6.3, below) but instead died in a prison on Skye after his plans were thwarted (Miers 2008: 5). This is but one of countless similar scenarios which affected the tranquillity of the Scottish landscape while supporting a continued need for safe accommodation which was often answered by the security of islands. This scenario extended well into the Post-Medieval period, reminding readers that despite the lack of large-scale conflict, mass migration or any broad political stress upon the inhabitants (with the exception perhaps of the Lords of the Isles, below) until the clearances of the 19th century, a prevalent state of localised tension often existed in a region that was as peripheral from increasingly centralised mainland powers (including Norway) as anywhere in the British Isles. This factor alone provides a strong case for the continuation of island dwelling occupation and renewal throughout the post-Medieval period.

Figure 5.18 *The Udal, North Uist – long tern occupation from the Iron Age to the 17th century.*

5.6 Centralisation: the political realigning of the Western Isles 1098 AD-

Perhaps the most influential period of Norse power in the Western Isles, from a purely political standpoint, stems from the 1098 AD ceding of the Western Isles from Edgar, King of Scotland to Magnus III of Norway, or 'Magnus Barelegs' as he is better known. His short reign (b. 1073 - d.1103) ended with his death on an Irish battlefield trying to expand an empire which had already absorbed much of the Irish Sea region to the south, centring upon the Isle of Man. Despite this short-lived reign, the Western Isles was to remain under Norse control until 1266AD when Alexander III regained control through the Treaty of Perth, although the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland were to remain under Norse rule until 1469AD. By the time of this treaty in the mid-13th century, settlement in the Western Isles was still predominately centred upon the low-lying coastal machairs while it is commonly held that the following century witnessed an expansion into the 'Blacklands' or interior hinterlands, an area which had not previously seen much in the way of concentrated settlement since perhaps the Neolithic Period (Sharples & Parker-Pearson 1999: 41). However, this view is perhaps unfounded given that little in the way of survey exists in areas such as eastern South Uist and much of Lewis.

Parker-Pearson himself has hinted that his previous survey work may dramatically change this, but as yet the publication *From Machair to Mountains* is eagerly awaited[14] (Parker-Pearson: in press). Despite a formal shift in political control, the Norse were by this time no strangers to the Western Isles, having already established permanent settlements for some two centuries by the time Magnus secured recognised ownership. Whether this was by force, as Crawford has suggested at the Udal (Crawford & Switsur 1977: 131) or rather a decidedly more quiet assimilation into the existing population is surely a matter of specific, localised scenarios although given the nature of Viking forays, indigenous resistance to their arrival was certainly met with equal or greater force by these stubborn new incomers. Overall, Sharples and Parker-Pearson argue for continuity in settlement patterns extending from the mid-first millennium BC to the 14th century (Sharples & Parker-Pearson 1999: 42). In reality, localised patterns of settlement and change were likely more complex as McGovern suggests, yet is still hindered by a lack of excavation in comparison to the better

[14]In press at time of final edit of thesis 15-08-2011.

studied Northern Isles (1990:337). This has been slowly mitigated in recent years by the SEARCH initiative from Sheffield University on South Uist and Barra, but new finds are still typically reliant upon the shifting machairs (and rabbit burrows) to expose unknown sites. By comparison, the interior is even bleaker, given the expansive blanket peats and lack of intrusive human activity, with the exception of occasional peat cutting and sporadic development.

It is within this context that the robust remains of drystone island dwellings appear both prominent today and in comparatively large quantity, given that traces of terrestrial remains are quickly swallowed up by blanket peats – or may have been made out of peat themselves which renders them archaeological invisible in a short period. The available nature of terrestrial stone foundations also had made them a particularly easy target for industrious hands, using this material for countless projects over the ensuing centuries. Spatial organisation throughout the Medieval Hebrides seems to remain largely unchanged as the changing political control of the Western Isles likely had little direct impact upon the daily regimen for the majority of people, only manifesting change for those directly involved in the political affairs of the region. As Armit remarks:

> *'Although political authority and land rights would have changed at the top end... the individual land rights and obligations of the native people may not have been so radically different' (1996: 203).*

There are elements in the material culture which may suggest an underlying them of changing identities. Alan Lane has also examined pottery from the Udal, and based upon this has defined a distinct class of pottery that can be reliably associated with Norse incomers, replacing late Pictish forms with undecorated, grass-marked pottery (Lane 1990: 108). The pottery was recovered in quantity from the Udal, while Norse burials remain poorly understood. Ironically, the settlements themselves from this period remain the most elusive, despite the adoption of Norse place-names throughout the Western Isles. It is likely that many post-medieval and modern Hebridean settlements stand on the same locations as their Norse predecessors, recycling building materials over and over. In this fashion, Armit points out that rectilinear drystone (or peat) structures can easily be assimilated into later typologies which mimic these forms while their locations were often continuously occupied as farmsteads erasing evidence of initial phases of development

(1996: 188) making it difficult to distinguish any degree of resolution. Conceptually, the Norse arrival is visible in many archaeological elements such as pottery and occasional burials yet evidence for a prolific reshaping of society is not archaeologically visible, rather indicating a assimilation between indigenous and outsider that would have seen an initial violent struggle before progressing into a settled, internal society. The Western Isles were not a key focus for Norse migrants, instead forming a stopover on the way to destinations further south. Ireland especially drew the bulk of Norse ambitions towards this fertile area which had much more to offer in the way of both riches and sustainable expansion than the barren and bleak Outer Hebrides where only relatively small numbers could be absorbed into the existing populous.

What part island dwelling use plays in Medieval Hebridean society is therefore likely an end result of two different reoccurring variables in this thesis: continuity versus change. While use continued to an unknown degree closely following the Norse arrivals, it remained strong enough to weather several centuries of assimilation and break from traditional forms (i.e. circular structures), as mainland parts of Scotland such as the south west indicate, later to re-emerge as a widely employed settlement form in the Western Isles by the 14th century. Indeed, the Western Isles sees the most adherence to the island dwelling tradition, continuing in large numbers into the post-Medieval period. If Eilean na Comhairle, a crannog in Loch Finlaggan, Islay, is any indicator as the primary residence of John MacDonald in the mid-14th century, it can safely be ascertained that status was not lacking from the image of loch-dwellers. Yet before this rise to power of the first self-styled 'Lord of the Isles', there were several major actors who paved the way, including Somerled who was known as *ri Innse Gall,* loosely translated as 'King of the Foreigners' perhaps the first identifiable person to claim a distinct lordship over the isles. The following succession bridging the ascension of John MacDonald involves a mixture of Somerled's descendants, Norwegians and, increasingly, the attention of the Scottish crown who probably held a combination of healthy fear and contempt for the self-styled rulers of a maritime kingdom whose use of Birlinns or Highland galleys, a derivative of the Norse clinker-built ships unique to Scotland, allowed them open access to much of the Irish Sea region.

While this legacy makes for interesting reading in the many history books on the topic of Scottish identity, the crux of the issue in this context is the reshaping of political identity through the occupation of prominent settlement forms, embodied within the aforementioned Eilean na Comhairle. Running parallel to the intricate plot of contested kingships and power plays that typify the political backdrop of the Western Isles in the Middle Ages is the emergence of a new type of island dwelling, often on a scale previously unmatched-the 'island castle'. The development of this form is perhaps best exemplified by sites such as Kisimul Castle, Barra and Stalker Castle, Argyll, dramatic Medieval culminations of both Norman influenced architecture and the on-going tradition of occupying small islets, though it must be pointed out that artificial islands could clearly not provide a stable foundation for such heavy structures. Instead, changing architectural demands required a foundation which was capable of supporting substantial tower houses, curtain walling and other accoutrements of the evolving castle. As picturesque as the examples above may be, their predecessors would hardly be recognised today as 'castles' rather small yet robust rectilinear structures. Dun Raouill, Loch Drudibeag, South Uist is a clear example of this niche, while nearby Castle Bheagram, several kilometres due east, is a small blockhouse formerly surrounded by a number of lesser outbuildings and drystone walling. However, it is clear even the 'lesser' examples above still represent dwellings of middle or indeed upper classes, and remain prominent today in contrast to the rolling landscape surrounding them.

5.7 Considerations of island dwellings in the Western Isles

5.7.1 Access and the implications of causeways

Causeways are a particularly common feature of Hebridean island dwellings, yet very little has been discussed regarding what they may imply about the occupants besides simply representing one method of access (fig. 5.19). The strong desire for the use of causeways in the Western Isles contrasts to the material record of many mainland sites, although the use of stone versus wood has undoubtedly influenced survival rates in favour of Hebridean sites. As a result, many Hebridean island duns still contain visible evidence of elaborate means of access. Beveridge noted that out of the 60 islets he examined on North Uist, Loch Hunder

and Loch Obisary were the only sites where causeways were not apparent (1911: 134). A number of Hebridean island dwellings display exceptionally elaborate means of access. At the intertidal site of Dun Innsegall (NF 0194 8521), Harris a 26m causeway connects to a seaward islet but does not connect to the mainland, making this site unique in this regard (RCAHMS 1928: no. 144). Dun an Sticer, North Uist (NF 8972 7768), although recorded as being occupied as late as c.1600AD in the Old Statistical Account, contains a 'Y' shaped system of causeways, large enough for a carriage, that converges on two small islets before continuing some 45m to the main site, a galleried round house that still survives to some 18m dia., with walls some 3.5m in thickness and 3.6m in overall height[15] (Beveridge 1911: 139; RCAHMS 1928: no.171; Armit 1992a: 150). Additional methods of controlling access noted by Beveridge, while not completely preventing it, consisted of curving or 'S' shaped causeways or gaps between 1 and 6 metres in length (1911: 135-6). Of islet sites visited in July 2009 only Dun Raouill, a medieval castle, did not indicate a causeway when examined underwater. Several jetties or breakwaters radiated away from the site, then abruptly terminated as the loch deepened to over 5 metres. A large (6x8m) platform on the SW shoulder of the site in approximately a half metre of water remains as what was most likely a landing area for boats.

In fact, underwater observations have revealed a striking amount of effort that went into the construction of causeways. Dun Mor, Geirinis, South Uist, Dun Ban, Grimsay, North Uist, and Dun Borasdail, Benbecula all contained causeways that utilised very large stones, in some instances weighing up to perhaps 1500kg[16], with courses of stone standing approximately 2 metres or more in height for certain segments, and extending as far as 80 metres. This is the equivalent of building a substantial wall underwater, often utilising curves and irregular angles to either make access difficult or utilise the loch bed, making use of natural reefs. This also indicates that the builders had an intimate knowledge of the lochbed – likely achieved through swimming or probing the loch bottom. Once this task was complete, the structure itself on the islet could be built without the use of watercraft although practicality between designs varies greatly.

[15] Metric units converted from Beveridge's use of feet and yards
[16] Weight for Gneiss calculated at 2625kg/cubic metre based upon Holley's determinations (2000:226)

Another factor that becomes readily apparent is the initial difficulty in walking a causeway, especially a slightly submerged example. Until it has been traversed a number of times to discover the best areas for footing, it is a painstaking, if not somewhat comical affair, that would only be complicated by carrying a load of supplies to the islet. In this manner only those who regularly used the causeway (i.e. the inhabitants or frequent visitors) would be able to reliably and efficiently use it without a very real risk of injury, either due to the insecure footing or the actions of the occupants themselves. It could be argued that my experiences are simply down to not being familiar with the site and unaccustomed to walking across such a device.

I would disagree given my experiences over the past three years. Even if negotiated on a frequent basis by the most seasoned occupants, stone causeways would require focus and concentration to swiftly traverse. Furthermore, submerged examples can be extremely slippery due to algae and, from personal experience, are similar to walking on ice-covered boulders – a problem that would affect anyone, regardless of their physical prowess. It is therefore likely that many island dwellings had at least some type of raft or boat besides a causeway, if not to ferry large goods, to exit via other parts of the shoreline. Loch Cnoc a' Bhudie, South Uist (NF72NW10) still contains an elaborate causeway in excess of 80 metres (fig 5.20), yet surprisingly when snorkelling to the site the water was often considerably less than 1 metre in depth; it was much easier to wade to the islet instead, while the thought of using the causeway never became a serious option. My team member was unable to cross using the causeway, and turned around after several minutes of effort which yielded them only 15-20 metres of progress. When viewed from the shore, however, the water is not clear enough to realise the slight depth. Given the narrow and treacherous surface of the causeway, I would estimate that it would take at least three times longer to walk across it, rather than simply walk beside it. Therefore it could realistically be asked: 'was the causeway perhaps intended as a distraction for those who were unaware that the loch was shallow enough to easily stand in?' Only those familiar with the site would have known this, while visitors would have been confronted with a 10-15 minute affair slowly picking their way over the narrow path which lead to the islet – perhaps to the amusement of the occupants.

Figure 5.19 *The 1915 RCAHMS surveyors 'roping up' to negotiate the causeway at Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn, North Uist. My research emphasis the use of alternate forms of access and questions the rationale behind the construction of causeways.*

It could therefore be argued that 'improbable' causeways have substantially deteriorated since construction, or that they represent modern (and hasty) efforts by fishermen, crofters or day visitors, yet underwater inspection contradicts this notion. First, crofters intentionally block access to causeways to prevent sheep from straying onto islets. Dun an t-Siamain and Loch Cnoc a' Buidhe both have later cross walling which restricts access, apparently for sheep but not humans, as they are easily surmounted and do not indicate any tumble. Given the size and weight of many lower 'foundational' causeway stones, along with the relative lack of tumble alongside, it is clear that most causeways were not easily or carelessly built on a whim. Additionally, the overall quantity of stone, and the amount which remains *in situ*, further suggests that these were well-planned features requiring organised labour and considerable time both in and under the water – not likely built during a recreational outing.

Notably, out of all the sites investigated underwater in the Western Isles, there were no causeways which showed evidence of any appreciable collapse, although there does exist wide variation in the quality and methods of construction. These methods ranged from simply throwing in masses of smaller stones to create a virtual promontory, such as Loch

Figure 5.20 *Loch Cnoc a' Bhuidhe, South Uist. The site contains a curving, 80m causeway which is largely impractical to negotiate, even accounting for deterioration. The loch is less than 1m deep between the site and the shore.*

Olabhat, North Uist (Armit 2009; NF77 NW13) to expertly stacked boulders and slabs in deep water requiring serious physical efforts – Dun Ban, Grimsay (*see* below; NF85NE7). Therefore from a functional standpoint the majority of causeways appear well designed to *impede,* not facilitate access variously through their submerged nature, occasional gaps, possible tipping stones[17], etc. In that regard, many Hebridean causeways almost seem to exist more as an elaborate form of 'red-herring' for would be occupiers, than as practical device for access. In reality, there are very few island dwellings in the Western Isles, and virtually zero on the mainland, which today have evidence for easily negotiable causeways – even for the occupants. This suggests that the majority of occupied islets in Scotland had alternate forms of access such as watercraft or the occupants were intimate with the layout of the lochbed around allowing them to simply walk to the site.

In regards to islets in shallow lochs or intertidal areas, it becomes considerably more complicated to rationalise the existence of many causeways. In many of my experiences, it

[17]A tipping stone is often mentioned by local inhabitants who are of the opinion that large stones were intentionally placed so that stepping on them causes them to rock and strike neighbouring stones. This produces a low bass sound audible for some distance – perhaps alerting the occupants. While this does occasionally happen when walking causeways, it is more likely a result of natural processes such as subsidence, and not an intentional by-product of human action.

was personally easier and much faster to simply wade out as to try and use the causeway, regardless of condition. Therefore the construction of causeways may seem entirely counter-intuitive on the part of the builders, but a case can be made for *not* using causeways unless a specific reason existed. If the reader assumes I am merely poor at negotiating causeways (which is certainly debatable), there is literary evidence which suggests traditional Highland garments were well-suited to wading in water. I think it is important to note here that the traditional form of Highland clothing (not the kilt), namely the belted plaid or *Breacan an Fhéilidh* was comparable, if not largely identical, to earlier forms which date back at least to the 11th century, and likely much earlier. A reference can be found in the 1093AD *Magnus Berfaet saga* which relates how the Norwegian King Magnus III or 'Barelegs' earned his nickname by modelling his style of dress upon that of the Hebridean and Western Scottish inhabitants he later ruled over:

> *People say that when King Magnus came home from his Viking cruise to the Western countries, he and many of his people brought with them a great deal of the habits and fashion of clothing of those western parts. They went about on the streets with bare legs, and had short kirtles and over-cloaks; and therefore his men called him Magnus Barefoot or Bareleg*

George Buchanan later wrote in the late 16th century after visiting Highland Scotland:

> *The majority now in their dress prefer a dark brown, imitating nearly the leaves of the heather, that when lying upon the heath in the day, they may not be discovered by the appearance of their clothes; in these wrapped rather than covered, they brave the severest storms in the open air, and sometimes lay themselves down to sleep even in the midst of snow.* (Buchanan 1581).

As the belted plaid was simply a measure of cloth wrapped around the upper half of the body and gathered around the waist, one wearing this could easily raise it to walk through shallow bog and water while still being able to sleep outdoors in (relative) comfort year-round – ideal for the Hebridean landscape. A number of woodcarvings also exist which depict this garment during the Medieval Period, while letters from Duncan Forbes, Lord Culloden written prior to 1747 further relate:

> *The belted plaid fits men inured to it to go through great fatigues, to make very quick marches, to bear out against the inclemency of the weather, to wade through rivers and shelter in huts, woods, and rocks upon occasion; which men dressed in the low country garb could not possibly endure ' (1815: 289).*

While there would have been multiple means of accessing occupied islets, whether through causeways, watercraft or perhaps simply wading, it is important to question the cognitive processes behind 'creating a space' in the landscape through the use if islets (Rennell 2009: 18). The creation of this space, as a form of settlement enclosed by water, indicates control over not only space but access in terms that are explicit. As Harding states in his examination of the northern Iron Age in Britain: 'The idea of defining personal or communal space by enclosure is endemic in human society as much as it is in other social animals... even across open ground or open water around crannogs an intruder would doubtless be aware of encroaching on someone else's space, which can be marked in various ways (Harding 2004: 290). Thus, island dwellings are also a reflection of the occupants identity, and a reflection of their perception of their place in the world, separate and exclusive. People do not accidentally wander onto small occupied islets. In comparison, earthen banks surrounding enclosed settlements might conceivably be mistaken for natural features, especially if they are on a hilltop and therefore out of view. Therefore, gaining access to enclaves on small islets is either accomplished bilaterally, i.e. with the occupants permission, or unilaterally without consent as an act which would likely be taken as a violation of personal space.

5.8 Hebridean 'Islet Societies' and the longue durée

Not surprisingly, water plays an unavoidable, integral part of Hebridean life in the North Atlantic. Until recent times, navigating the waters surrounding the Hebrides was perhaps the easiest way to travel along the island chain as were many parts of Atlantic Scotland (Waddell 1992; Cunliffe 2001; Harding 2004; Henderson 2007b). Of course this was the only way of accessing the mainland as well; the ability to navigate maritime routes would have increased contact with similar groups perhaps equally proficient in seamanship from the Northern Isles, Atlantic mainland Scotland, the Isle of Mann, Ireland and beyond. This would directly contribute to the exposure of varying types of settlement construction and architectural styles , yet by the Iron Age Henderson indicates similar settlement forms were already in use throughout these areas, effectively masking any outright indications of short-term or sudden influences (2007: 170). Therefore the archaeological visibility of contact is observable in adaptations of complex settlement forms such as broch towers, but much less apparent in

material culture which seems to have developed on a more insular, regional trajectory rather than a wholesale adaptation of 'standardised' forms (*ibid*). Essentially, localised traditions appear to have held sway over stylistic developments in portable material culture, yet unmistakable elements in settlement architecture (i.e. the appearance of 'simple' and 'complex' Atlantic roundhouses) indicates a degree of tangible contact that stretched from Shetland to Galloway in later prehistory.

Despite Hebridean sites taking different approaches to construction methods due to cultural variation and material resources available, the traditional *packwerk* and stone/timber varieties which dominate the mainland closely follow in form and function to Hebridean islets. There are certainly fundamental differences such as the relatively elaborate Hebridean drystone superstructures and causeways, which are visible today in no small part a product of differing survival rates for stone versus wood even in favourable waterlogged conditions. The overall effort involved for either building a small artificial island in Loch Tay, Perthshire for example, or going to the great extremes to construct monumental houses and massive causeways such as Dun an Sticer, North Uist were clearly not done for reasons of economy (Cavers 2010: 15). It would be much simpler to build a site on land, and merely dig a ditch if being surrounded by water was the primary aim.

However this is not the case, nor can island dwelling be regarded in such simple terms. Building a site in the middle of an islet is conceptually akin to building settlements atop a hill – both are visible for great distances and attract attention, yet they also retain an element of prestigious isolation while also providing the occupants with an inherent sense of security. Considerations such as defence were merely part of an overall collective set of strategies when living on water that attracted settlers to construct the first reinforced or artificial islets for places to live. In fact, examples of weaponry, destruction or evidence of conflict itself are highly unusual, either on or near Scottish island dwellings. The only prehistoric exceptions are Iochdar, South Uist and Carlingwark Loch, Kircudbrightshire (Gregory 1857: 365; Anderson 1879: 327). Even these sites merely show the deposition of swords along with other metalwork, not any conclusive evidence of violence. Instead the material assemblages for *all* Scottish island dwellings typically indicate a settled pastoral and agrarian society giving way to dwellings of visible status – not necessarily high status. Once occupied, the majority

of Hebridean sites were intended as long-term, permanent dwellings, appearing secure but in reality quite easy to access. Living on islets also provides contrast to an often bleak landscape in hinterland areas of the Hebrides, especially sites located near the sea. Summer months in the Western Isles produce a wide range of colours within the environment. However, during inclement weather or short days, the vast Hebridean beaches and tidal flats provide the only source of visual stimulation and variety in an otherwise relatively matte and drab environment. The fact that many islets here are locally know by the Gaelic endings Buidhe (yellow) or Ruadh (red) after the colours of flowers which grow on them[18], highlights the notion that a degree of contrast and variety in the landscape did not go unnoticed. In this regard, from the Iron Age onwards concerns and desires were perhaps not explicitly different than those today, despite the emergence of ostentatious islet-based monumental forms which later developed into full-blown castles during the later medieval period, exemplified by Kisimul Castle, Barra and Stalker Castle, Argyll, while Erskine Beveridge himself choose to build his stately home on the island of Vallay. Choosing to build in a watery setting likely relates more to domination of the landscape through being able to conquer nature (i.e. inhabit or create islands) from a preferred location, with defensive considerations (against humans) playing secondary roles.

5.8.1 Insularity versus contact in the Western Isles

There exists a sense of timelessness which typically pervades discussions of Hebridean society. Given the frequent survival of ancient monuments and the preservation of the landscape from over-development, this is understandable (fig. 5.21). It can be said that an underlying theme of pre-clearance continuity set within a (now) largely unique culture still exists. The survival of age-old traditions such as the blackhouses[19], the *ceilidh*[20], a high rate of native Gaelic spoken in the household and conservative religious beliefs, especially on Lewis, may appear unusual to many outsiders today. The Western Isles are also unique in

[18]This information was provided by Kate MacDonald, a historian and lifelong resident of South Uist who now manages the Kildonan Museum there.

[19]Blackhouses are direct descendants from late prehistoric and Early Historic Hebridean drystone houses, having no chimneys or windows with smoke escaping through thatched roofs. One entrance was used by both humans and livestock who then occupied opposite ends of the house. Earlier examples did not have a fireplace. Peat was simply burned openly in a heap on a dirt floor.

[20]A ceilidh (pronounced *kay-lee*) was originally a social gathering of any sort, although today it typically involves music and dancing where the local community is invited.

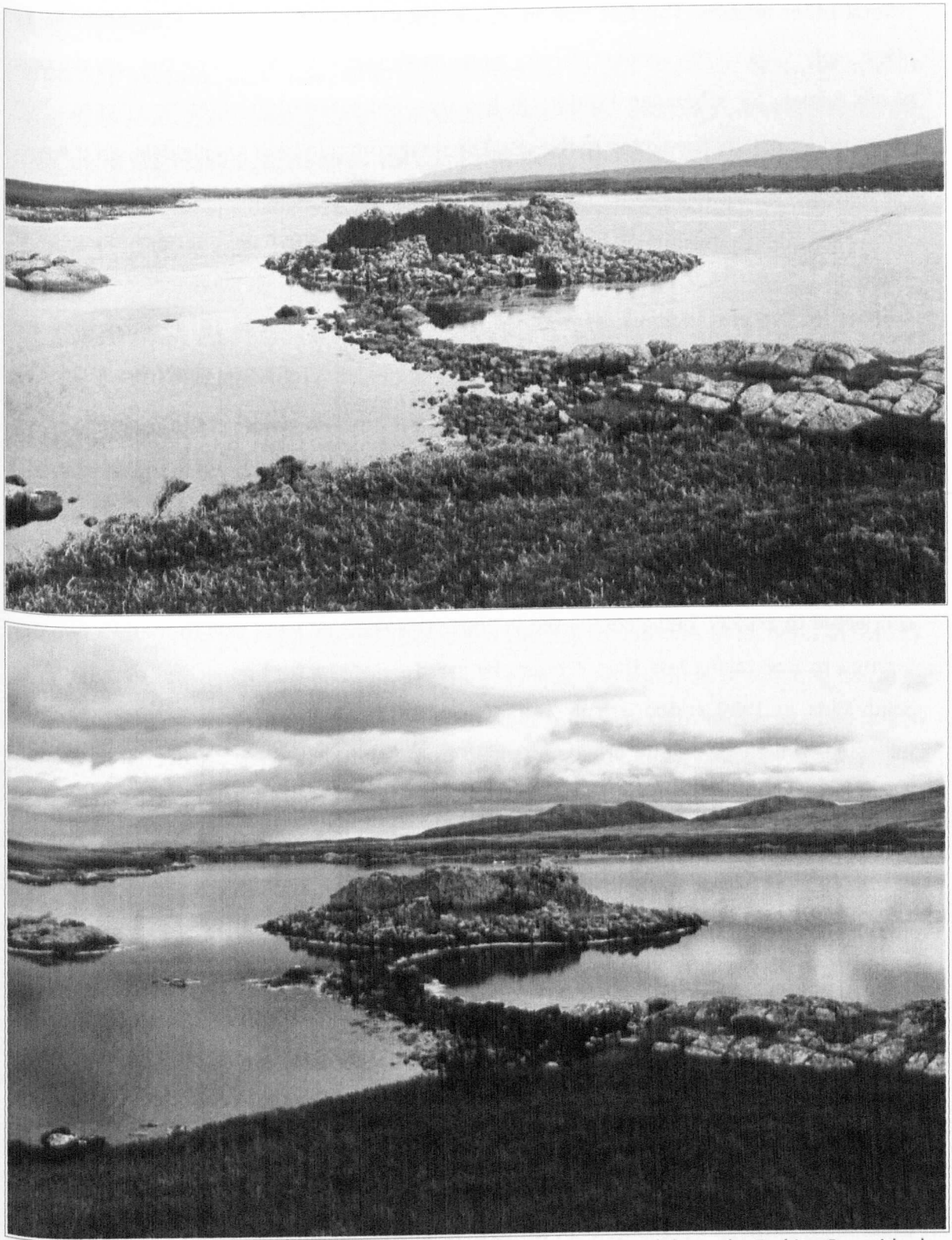


Figure 5.21 *Dun Torcuill, North Uist: one-hundred years on – c.1911 (above, by Erskine Beveridge) and in 2010 (below, author).*

several other aspects. The fact that most visitors arrive by ferry, or less occasionally by plane, only adds to this unique identity while Barra lays claim to having the world's only beach runway for scheduled flights – at low tide. More remote Hebridean villages often remained intimately connected to the sea. The small community of Rhenigidale, on the east coast of Harris, was only accessible by sea or on foot until a road was finally constructed in 1989. Prior to this, schoolchildren walked three miles over a steep pass to reach the nearest school in Tarbert. To the north, Na Gearrannan, Lewis was the last surviving community in Scotland to live in traditional blackhouses. The last residents left in 1974; today they are restored and used as nostalgic holiday homes (updated with windows, chimneys, electricity and fire alarms).

In a similar vein, the tradition of building causeways in the Hebrides is still alive[21] as the construction of modern causeways between the larger islands Hebridean islands recently illustrates, linking Berneray, North Uist, and Benbecula to South Uist while Barra is now connected to Eriskay, being completed in 2001. This reduced what was formerly a two day journey to one taking less than 4 hours by car. Finally, the well-publicised evacuation of Saint Kilda in 1930 ended a truly remote way of life that had persisted for over two millennia, while two unique breeds of sheep from Saint Kilda were discovered to directly relate to Neolithic and Bronze Age species (Ryder 1981: 382). With the events above often retold on television and in the press, it becomes quite easy to stereotype Hebridean culture as one that is insular and unchanging. Yet this is not the case, as change is a force which may not behave consistently, but remains ever-present. The abandonment of insular forms in Scotland, in particular the island dwelling, attest to this dynamic, despite several millennia of widespread use. In reality, just over a century ago when people were still relying solely upon seafaring for main transportation routes in Western Scotland, this apparently insular Hebridean lifestyle would have been mirrored by numerous 'isolated' mainland coastal settlements from the Mull of Galloway to Cape Wrath. In this light, physical location cannot be seen to create an exclusive segment of Scottish Archaeology within a Hebridean context while social patterns were largely similar to mainland paradigms.

[21] In the early 1950s the 400 residents of Bernera threatened to dynamite the cliffs on Lewis until enough rubble was available to make a causeway to their island. The local government quickly yielded; the causeway opened in 1953 [Stornoway Gazette, July 22, 1953].

5.8.2 Closing thoughts on the Western Isles

While the Western Isles have often been viewed in largely separate terms from most aspects of Scottish archaeology, the high occurrence of island dwellings underscores the fact that there are many opportunities for comparisons to be made with mainland lifestyles. Despite the overwhelming use of stone, the conceptual similarities in location and architectural styles to mainland sites provide a useful avenue of interpretation for artificial timber islets, especially in regards to layout, orientation and what dimensions the houses on a timber crannog may have taken. The fact that both the mainland and Western Isles make frequent use of artificial islets is another clear manifestation of cultural affinities between the two areas. Although the Western Isles can be viewed as remote and 'apart' especially in modern terms, in the past, whether this was during the Iron Age or the Medieval Period, the reality would have been different due to the primary reliance upon seafaring to navigate along the coastline of Scotland and areas within the Irish Sea zone to the south. Conversely, as history shows, the Norse arrivals in both the Western and Northern Isles undoubtedly had a lasting impact on both political structures and the day to day lives of all ranks in society. Despite the changes in land-based architecture, such as the adoption of the long-house by the end of the first millennium AD, the use of islets in the Western Isles continued largely unabated in comparison to mainland activity on islets which appears to taper off considerably until sometime around the 13th century. Exceptions always exist when discussing islet use, yet the affinity for living on water remained more consistent in the Western Isles than on the mainland. The distribution and typologies of occupied islets in the Inner Hebrides also points to a hybridisation of this site type between the mainland and the Western Isles.

Given the high density of Hebridean islets, and their long chronology, one may expect to look towards this area for undocumented examples which represent use during periods not well attested to on the mainland, primarily during the Bronze Age and Norse Period. Therefore, tremendous potential exists in the Western Isles, given the productivity of recent excavations in comparison to the low percentage of site excavation. The next chapter details my fieldwork in the Western Isles, primarily in the Uists.

Chapter 6

Fieldwork in the Western Isles and Highlands: Underwater inspection and situation in the landscape

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Approaches to fieldwork

The 2009 and 2010 fieldwork element of this thesis concentrated upon the visual inspection of 47 reported or unconfirmed islets (Blundell 1913; Armit 1992; RCAHMS 1928; 2009) primarily on North Uist, Grimsay, Benbecula and South Uist in the Western Isles in addition to one on Lewis and one in the Highlands and Sutherland respectively. This included underwater inspection which focused upon eight sites in Benbecula, nine on South Uist, and eleven on North Uist. Three additional sites on Benbecula, four on South Uist and ten on North Uist were subject to walkover inspection while two were inaccessible at the time.

Five primary sources exist for the identification of previous archaeological work in the Western Isles. The first is Erskine Beveridge's *North Uist* (1911), a comprehensive listing of sites both suspected or confirmed. This was followed by the 1928 RCAHMS survey, Ian Armit's PhD research, later published as a British Archaeological Report (1992:145-183), the SEARCH initiative (Parker-Pearson *et al.* 2004) and finally, the current Canmore database. In contrast to underwater survey work in Lewis (Dixon and Topping 1986) and South Uist (Raven & Shelly 2004; Lenfert 2010) and North Uist (Lenfert 2011), underwater excavation in the Hebrides has been virtually non-existent, with the only fieldwork occurring at Dun Bharabhat (Harding and Dixon 2000) and Eilean Domhnuill (Armit 2003). Therefore, future underwater survey and excavation in the Uists can be expected to illuminate means of construction, features and variation in the different styles used (i.e. boat noosts, causeways and any other visible structural components, discussed below) while producing artefacts in the form of diagnostic pottery sherds, lithics or domestic items such as saddle or rotary querns. Underwater survey and excavation work also provides access to often intact organic layers from occupation levels or midden deposits adjacent to the islet – this level of

Sites visited	NMRS No.	Location
Dun Aonais	**NF75SE 9**	**Benbecula**
Dun Ruadh	**NF75SE 8**	**Benbecula**
Dun Mhic Uisdein	**NF85SW7**	**Benbecula**
Dun Buidhe	NF75SE1	Benbecula
Dun Eilean Iain	**NF75SE 6**	**Benbecula**
Dun Torcusay	NF75SE 5	Benbecula
Loch Hermidale	NF85 SW6	Benbecula
Dun Borosdale	**NF75SE7**	**Benbecula**
Dun Ban, Grimsay	**NF85NE 7**	**North Uist**
Dun An Sticer	**NF87NE1**	**North Uist**
Loch Iosal an Duin	NF97NW6	North Uist
Eilean Maelit	NF77SE 5	North Uist
Eilean A'Ghallain I	NF77NW 1	North Uist
Eilean A'Ghallain II	NF77NW 2	North Uist
Eilean Domhnuill	NF77NW 3	North Uist
Eilean Olobhat	NF77NW 13	North Uist
Dun Thomaidh	NF77NE 3	North Uist
Loch Nan Gearrachun	NF77SE 2	North Uist
Loch Nan Gearrachun	NF77SE 1	North Uist
Loch Nan Clachan	NF77SE 4	North Uist
Dun Aonais	NF87SE 4	North Uist
Dun Torcuill	NF87SE 3	North Uist
Loch na Caiginn	NF97SE 2	North Uist
Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn	**NF97 NE4**	**North Uist**
Loch Na Cointich (not located)	NF97SE 5	North Uist
Loch Na Dubcha	NF97SE 3	North Uist
Dun Ban, Carinish	NF86SW 20	North Uist
Loch Carabhat	NF86SW 70	North Uist
Dun Ban Hacklett	NF86SE 1	North Uist
Loch Nan Gealag	NF85NE 3	North Uist
Loch Obisary I	NF85NE 1	North Uist
Loch Obisary II	NF86SE 8	North Uist
Loch Obisary III	NF85NE 34	North Uist
Dun an t-Siamain	**NF85NE4**	**North Uist**
Dun na Buail' uachdraich	NF74NE 5	South Uist
Dun Raouill	**NF73NE 3**	**South Uist**
Dun Vulan	NF72NW1	South Uist
Loch An Duin Mhoir	NF74SE 3	South Uist
Eilean an Staoir	NF72NW 9	South Uist
Loch Cnoc na Buidhe	**NF72NW 10**	**South Uist**
Loch na Muilne (Loch Greanabeck)	NF72NW 6	South Uist
Unnamed near Dun na Buail' uachdraich	N/D	South Uist
Castle Bheagram	**NF73NE 4**	**South Uist**
Ardnamonie	NF74NE 3	South Uist
Dun Cromore	**NB42SW 2**	**Lewis**
Loch Hope, Durness, Sutherland	**NC45NE 22**	**Sutherland**
Corie an Lochan, Highland (discounted)	**NH01SW 2**	**Highland**

***Figure 6.1** Sites visited during the 2009 & 2010 field seasons.*

Location	Island Dwellings	Area km²	Km² per site
North Uist	80	300	3.75
The Western Isles	170	3,070	18.58
Islay	15	619	41.27
Argyll	84	7,436	81.36
Dumfries & Galloway	64	6,246	97.59
All other Council Areas	147	27,445	186.7
Ayrshire	11	2,947	267.9
Highland	80	30,659	383.24
Scotland (Total)	571	78,722	184.36

Figure 6.2 *Densities of islet sites throughout Scotland.*

preservation is one of the strongest aspects of underwater archaeology. The analysis of rich sources of organic occupation materials from island dwellings currently plays a supporting role to the 'site dominated' archaeology of Northern Britain, and therefore deserves more attention (Harding 2004: 6-7). The archaeological record on many Hebridean sites can produce limited (though not necessarily sparse) artefactual assemblages from complex stratigraphical contexts due to intense reuse. The synthesis of organic materials analysis into primary research goals therefore becomes apparent. The recovery of well-preserved waterlogged organics is simply not an option on many terrestrial sites. This availability of organics on occupied islets greatly influences archaeological and environmental interpretations in an Atlantic context, while helping to offset the image of an isolated cultural backwater in comparison to Southern Britain and the Continent (*ibid*:14). This can be achieved through the reconstruction of subsistence methods, cultural contact and environmental frameworks.

In light of a growing number of Hebridean radiocarbon dates careful consideration is required to avoid potentially erroneous interpretations of sites which often reveal several phases of discreet reuse during excavation (Armit 1996:145; Harding 2004: 8). Meaningful approaches for radiocarbon dating involve multiple sampling strategies from a specific

context, rather than relying on the 'one date is no date' adage. Currently only single radiocarbon dates exist for 14 Scottish island dwellings (*see* Appendix 2). Another important aspect for this study is their inclusion within the wider contemporary settlement landscape. Simply put, examining nearby contemporaneous structures to occupied islets is critical for better understanding their role in society. As Cavers states:

> *"The information gleaned from future studies can be maximised by taking a landscape approach, and by considering survey and excavation evidence for crannogs within the context of the full range of terrestrial settlements of the periods in which crannogs were occupied." (2010: 347)*

Despite glowing indications from utilising underwater methods, there can be drawbacks which are well documented. It is evident from Harding and Topping (1986) after their underwater survey in Lewis, and later Cavers and Henderson (2003) in the south west, that loch visibility can be highly variable. This unfortunately precludes many sites, especially on the mainland from effective excavation or survey. The situation in the Western Isles is, however, different. While not every loch in the Western Isles has great visibility e.g. >2 metres, in practice it is unusual to find any below this and several, such as Loch Hornary on Grimsay, may have >4metres visibility under the right conditions. This may not appear impressive, especially compared to open ocean where visibility can often reach 20-30m. However, mainland sites such as Cult's Loch or Loch Glashan typically have zero visibility which makes any practical underwater impossible. Much of this is due to run-off or agricultural activities which do not have as great an impact in the Western Isles.

In addition, the complexities of 'mixed' islet excavation, with stratigraphy both above and below water, must be expected and subsequently overcome in order to fully understand the site. Simply stopping at the water level can no longer be considered responsible archaeological practise unless reasons of safety dictate otherwise. Encountering the water table has traditionally prevented clear excavation to the lowest occupation sequences on numerous island dwellings throughout the years. However, as Dun Bharabhat and Eilean Domhnuill have illustrated, it is not technically difficult, especially if considered within the initial methodology. A common misconception is that underwater archaeology carries substantially higher project costs. In reality, this has much more to do with 'nautical' archaeology (i.e. shipwrecks) which may be in deep water far offshore, requiring the hire of live-aboard ships with integrated air compressors, etc. In contrast, lake diving is much shallower, allowing divers to stay on-site longer and more affordable than deep-sea

archaeology. For the cost of four or five radiocarbon samples, dive kit can be acquired. Once the necessary equipment has been procured, underwater survey can be performed as cheaply as land based projects, while submerged surface finds such as pottery often remain largely intact and not subject to freezing and thawing or accumulating overburden which often slowly pulverises ceramics deposited on land. This makes underwater work much more attractive when the potential returns are fully considered. The use of scuba gear, or merely mask and snorkel, allows archaeologists access to completely virgin areas immediately adjacent to sites - something which cannot be said for terrestrial locations.

6.2 Aims

The archaeological programme from 2009 and 2010 examined both the underwater and exposed 'components' of island dwellings (fig. 6.2) for structural features and diagnostic artefacts such as decorated pottery which turned out to be present on three sites in sufficient quantities to obtain a cursory chronological context for site use. Another aim was to examine the landscape distribution of sites from a first-hand perspective, taking into consideration their location to features such as prominent peaks and ease of maritime or inland waterway access. Straightforward observations were made regarding the situation of the islet in the landscape. Views from both within the islet and upon the islet, often from a much higher location in the surrounding landscape were considered. The 2009-2010 site visits, from a theoretical standpoint, are not to be confused with recent trends which I feel have produced questionable results regarding their actual usefulness in archaeology. These approaches involve computerised intervisibility studies and highly-derived forms of phenomenology. Although they may be employed by well-intentioned archaeologists, the results often become mired in debate (e.g., Tilley 1994; Brück 2005; Hamilton and Whitehouse 2006). While there is no substitute for actual site visits in order to take in the surrounding landscape as our ancestors did, the contentious sight, smell and hearing exercises which typify many phenomenological approaches were not employed as the results would be largely meaningless in the wind-swept Hebrides which are also prone to highly changeable visibility.

Ultimately, the site investigation over 2009 and 2010 sought to go beyond traditional concerns of later prehistoric structural minutiae (*cf* Holley 2000, MacKie 2007), rather gaining an understanding of rationale in relation to themes on subsistence strategy, defence,

mobility and social organisation within Hebridean societies. Regarding mobility, particular attention was paid to their accessibility by foot or boat, while considering proximity to natural landmarks, ancestral sites (e.g. chambered tombs) and waterway access to the interior and sea. Another aim of the 2010 field season in Scotland was to confirm or reject, through underwater investigation, sites that are listed by the RCAHMS as 'probable' or 'possible' island dwellings (i.e. Corie an Lochan, below). This work helps to clarify the actual numbers of confirmed or suspected island dwellings in Scotland. The results clarify and enhance the Canmore database, which I consider is currently in a disparate state regarding the categorisation of Scottish island dwellings. The public land use laws in Scotland are ideal for being able to access numerous locations across a wide area. No instances of being denied access by the land owners were encountered. To the contrary, the North Uist estates manager George MacDonald provided useful information regarding suspected or unrecorded sites and he deserves particular thanks.

When travelling to the Western Isles, I was able to extend examinations to several remote mainland sites in Argyll and Sutherland. This includes two completely submerged sites in the aptly named 'Loch Hope' (NC45 SE2 & NC45 NE22) some 25km from Cape Wrath in the far north west, and the improbable 'high-altitude' mountain site of Corie an Lochan, Argyll which, not surprisingly, turned out to be a natural feature given its unusual location (below). As part of the 2010 GAMA award, another element of the research involved the publication of several magazine and journal articles, along with a guide to the island dwellings of North Uist to build public awareness and interest (Lenfert 2011; Lenfert 2011a). This is fitting as 2011 marked the 100th anniversary of Erskine Beveridge's classic publication *North Uist* which contains many of Beveridge's excellent photographs of the archaeology found here. Therefore a strong photographic element formed part of a fitting tribute to Beveridge's influential work, while serving to record current site preservation in detail (Appendix 3). Backing has also been obtained for a comprehensive field guide of occupied islets in the Western Isles (Lenfert *forthcoming*). These publications have also accompanied the creation of a downloadable online web-resource using the Google Earth database for all Scottish island dwellings at https://sites.google.com/site/hebrideanarchofislands/.

6.2.1 Methodology and research questions

Investigated sites in the Western Isles are grouped by location (i.e. South Uist, Benbecula).

This helps clarify the often confusing naming and location for both specialist and new-comer alike[1], maintaining overall consistency while keeping the discussion in an organised format. Island dwellings in this research have been chosen based upon the information outlined below:

- Evidence for revetments or upstanding structures.
- Evidence for multiple phases of construction or repair, i.e. walling of noticeably different style or size along with any possible indication of re-use.
- Orientation of entranceway, if discernible
- Evidence for elaboration in causeway construction, i.e. gaps or multiple access points or alternative means of access such as log boats themselves or small harbours
- Degree and amount of organic material encountered, especially timbers as these are very rare in an Outer Hebridean context
- The presence of artefactual material, in particular lithics, pottery, possible metalwork or indeed evidence for boats
- Contemporaneous associated sites of archaeological importance on or near the foreshore that may have played an active role in relation to the islet

The fieldwork work was undertaken using mask, snorkel and drysuit only in 2009 as last minute news indicated that air cylinders were unavailable; they were purchased for the 2010 season. The use of scuba allowed much easier examination of the underwater component of these islets, asses the visible extent of artificiality, along with any structural features such as small boat access points, causeways or submerged platforms adjacent to the site, while the above-water component was examined when possible. Re-examining sites previously viewed by the RCAHMS, or otherwise recorded, allowed the opportunity to verify the condition of the site or make any additions or corrections. The actual technique employed for survey and recording was two-fold. Due to the remote location of many of the lochs in question, a lengthy approach on foot was often required for access. This dictated carrying all gear to the foreshore. Therefore initial investigations began with a simple mask and snorkel search to determine the underwater visibility and any structural feature present before heavier gear such as air cylinders and weight belts were brought on-site. A maximum depth of 3 to 4

[1] As there are eight different sites named 'Loch an Duin' and seven known as 'Dun Ban' in the Western Isles alone, it is important to clarify which is which, a situation rectified by naming both the NMRS designation and the particular loch as well.

Figure 6.3 *Location of island dwellings on Benbecula.*

metres was reached simply by free diving without air. This allowed a rapid assessment of the basal perimeter, causeway and/or revetments. As many of the island dwellings are at least partially exposed, the exposed surfaces were then examined unless vegetation prevented this. It is worth noting that due to the inaccessibility of islets by grazing animals such as deer or sheep and local peat cutters, hardier plants, brush and especially peat can colonise islets unhindered and obscure structural remains. It was critical to create as little disturbance as possible of bottom sediments which could reduce visibility to nil. The islets were approached by swimming from the leeward side of the loch when possible to keep disturbed material moving away from the area. Physical attributes were recorded including basal size, upper dimensions, distance from shore, length of causeway and depth of loch surrounding the site. After the initial fieldwork was completed, photographs and drawing were digitised and included in a results section which is discussed below in relation to finds or features noted on the sites.

In relation to the themes introduced in Chapter 1, additional questions were considered for survey sites:

1. What seems to be the impetus for a particular location
2. If evidence of re-use exists, can it be related to local settlement patterns?

3. What impact may the environment have contributed towards decisions to remain on or abandon a site?

4. What is the proximity of the site to the sea or inland routes, and how might it relate to possible water based trade networks, i.e. location of usable harbours or moorings?

5. What can this data contribute to a greater understanding of daily life on island dwellings

6. Does the site indicate potential for excavation, or has it been adversely affected by human or environmental factors?

7. If applicable, what does the layout of the causeway imply regarding control over access?

6.3 Benbecula

The first area examined in 2009 was Benbecula, an 82km^2 island effectively 'wedged' between South Uist, North Uist and Grimsay (fig. 6.3). The landscape is typical of the Uists, with machair along the west coast giving way to blacklands, or peat covered terrain inland. In contrast to its neighbours, Benbecula is predominately flat with a solitary hill (Rubhal)at 124m above sea level. This east coast remains a largely uninhabited expanse of low-lying bog interspersed with numerous small lochs. The 2001 census recorded a population of just over 1,200 people for the entire island, the majority of which live in the town of Balivanich on the west coast. There are 14 island dwellings on Benbecula, all of which are simply listed as 'duns' by the RCAHMS – not a single crannog is recorded on Benbecula. While not all recorded sites were dived in 2009, it became clear from aerial photos, shore visits and underwater examination that several are highly modified if still having natural foundations.

6.3.1 Dun Loch na Berigh,

Dun Loch na Berigh, Hacklett, (NF85 SW2), was noted by the RCAHMS (1928: no. 365) while Armit mentions the presence of a harbour and a 'substantial roundhouse' (1992: 157). Local tradition mentions a dun on the islet yet due to vegetation no other detail was observed. The site is unusual in that it lies towards the eastern half of Benbecula, well away from any machair and other occupied islets as a result. Loch na Berie is the most easterly located island dun on Benbecula in relative isolation within this hinterland and perhaps more closely related to sites across the channel on Grimsay such as Dun Ban, Loch Hornary The archaeological landscape around Loch na Berigh indicates substantial Neolithic activity in the

form of two sets of standing stones, two chambered cairns and a cup-marked stone north east of Haca, yet no other upstanding structures are known in the area until the modern period. The closest access in antiquity would have by via Flodaigh, today a small island on an inlet that leads out to the Minch, the channel separating the Western Isles from the mainland. Loch na Berigh was not directly accessible as it was surrounded by deep bog for a kilometre or more in all directions, yet aerial photography corroborates the presence of a harbour. The mention of a substantial building by Armit was not evident yet stone walling was visible. The linear nature of the walling and the harbour suggests a Medieval or later date for this construction, although earlier layers are always a possibility with island dwellings.

6.3.2 Dun Torcusay

Dun Torcusay (NF75 SE3), 1.6km west of Loch Borosdale, supports the substantial remains of a 'galleried dun' 15 metres in diameter with a possible entranceway situated to the SE quadrant (fig. 6.4). The stonework clearly appears in aerial photos with walling 2.5-3m in thickness . The dun was reported to have visible internal stonework almost a century ago when first visited by surveyors – this is still clearly visible in aerial photos as a substantial circular foundation. The islet is joined to the shore by a unique parallel dual causeway (RCAHMS no.347; Armit 1992: 157). The visible causeway is of an unusual design consisting of dual parallel stone tracks but this appears to be a later addition to support timbers for a cart; most likely to aid the robbing of building material; this was confirmed by the RCAHMS mention of stone removal for structures at nearby Nunton. In reality the causeway as it exists today is not passable, even on foot, indicating that timber would have been laid across it to allow wheeled access. The site was not walked as the islet was completely covered with dense aquatic vegetation during the 2009 visit. The location of the dun is situated towards the south east portion of the islet opposite the causeway. Although the majority of the stone has been removed, the foundations and perhaps inner area of the dun likely contain cultural material which can help date the site. If anything is to be gained from the removal of the material, it is the understanding that aerial photography can still clearly detect even heavily altered remains on islets with drystone structures.

6.3.3 Dun Buidhe

Dun Buidhe (NF75 NE1) is a 60m/dia. islet connected to a larger islet by a 43m causeway.

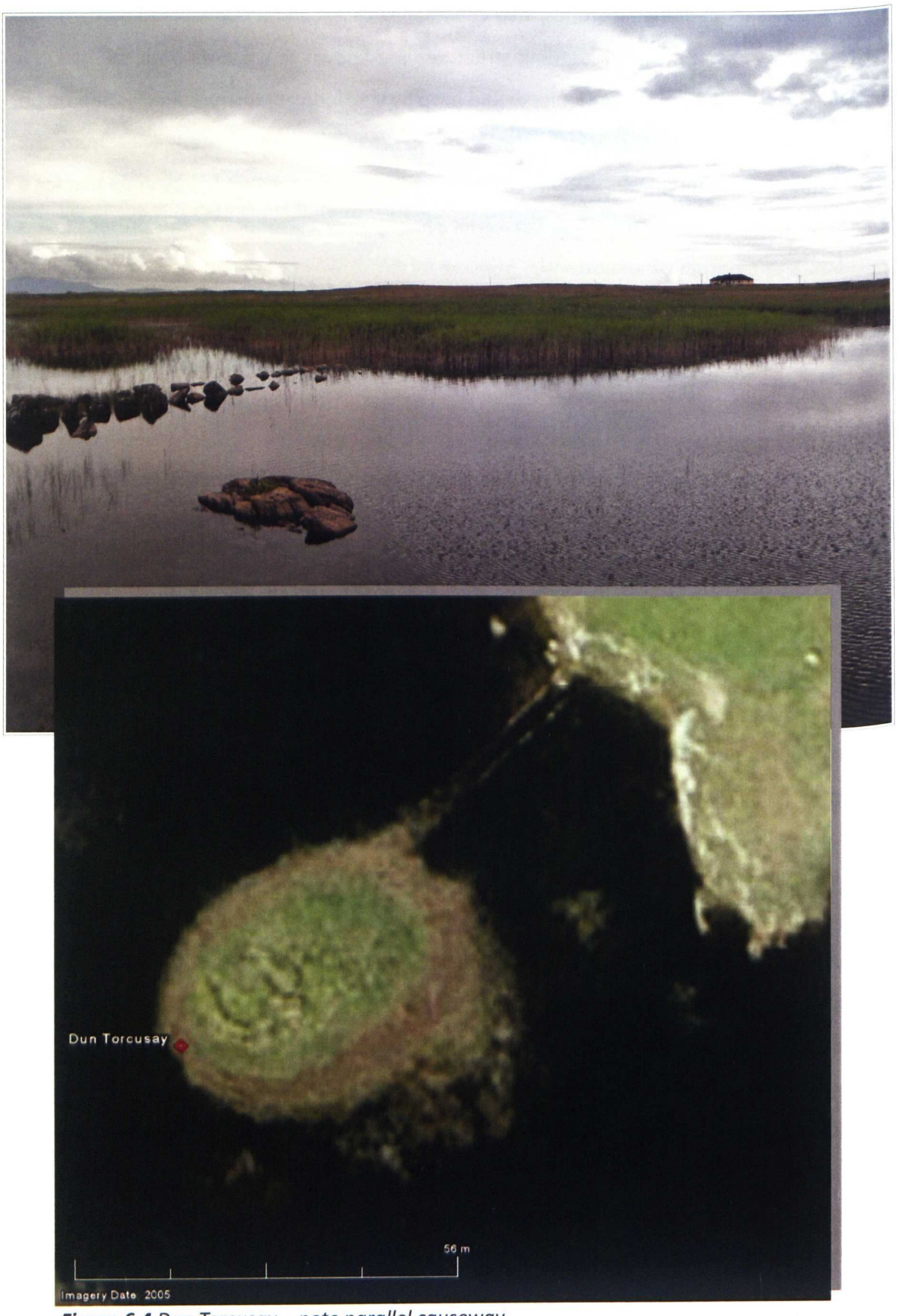


Figure 6.4 *Dun Torcusay – note parallel causeway.*

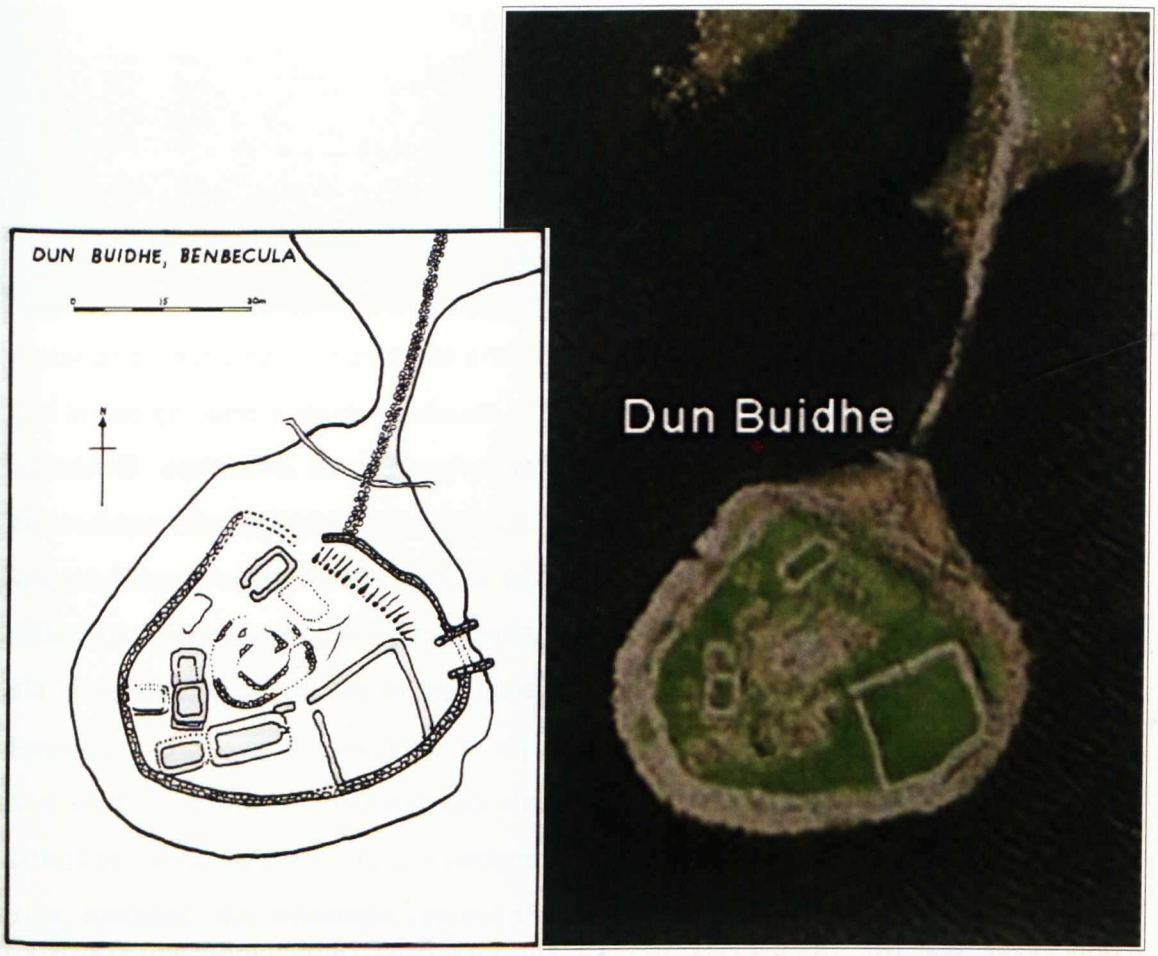


Figure 6.5 *Dun Buidhe, Benbecula and planview (Feachem 1963).*

The larger islet known as Eilean Dubh measures some 1600m^2 and is now connected to the shore by a rudimentary road capable of allowing modern vehicles to pass (fig. 6.5). The site was not inspected underwater due to drainage which has lowered the loch level substantially reducing the depth to <.5m around the site. The visible evidence suggests recent usage as a 'fank' or sheep enclosure with remains of at least five small linear stone enclosures. The amount of stone that survives in quantity on the surface belies possible prehistoric structural remains, but as it has been robbed substantially and is actively used, excavation is not practical. The remains of numerous later linear structures are superimposed upon the remains of an earlier circular mound of stone which has been heavily robbed. The mound measures some 13 metres/dia. on the east-west axis which roughly corresponds with the RCAHMS data taken in 1915, and a slight lessening of the rubble in the NE corroborates with the possibility of an entrance. The outer edge of the dun is composed of a considerable mass of boulders which was taken to be toppled walling yet it is probable that it was loosely

Figure 6.6 *Dun Eilean Iain with diver on islet.*

placed submerged revetment material when the loch was some 2m higher. The loch itself measures some 1200 by 600 metres although a partial lowering of the loch level is apparent. Additionally, evidence of galleries mentioned by RCAHMS are either obscured by peat or have been further robbed of materials. Alternatively, closer inspection of Eilean Dubh may well reveal much information about the formation and re-use of the area as aerial photos indicate both circular and linear cropmarks.

6.3.4 Dun Eilean Iain

Dun Eilean Iain (NF 7889 5351), lies 1.1 km SSW from Dun Buidhe and consists of a considerable submerged causeway some 80 metres in length from the SSE to the nearest land. Underwater investigation corroborates earlier reports of the causeway which traverses depths of up to 2.5m extending from the SSE quadrant of the site. The islet is heavily revetted; this may represent tumbled walling. A small harbour on the west side of the islet is visible while a 6x9m sub-rectangular structure with a west entrance faces the harbour. Adjacent to this, a 10 x 8m linear stone feature is also present which appears as the robbed out footer of an additional structure. Evidence of a third structure is no longer visible as described by Armit (1992:157). Based upon the quantity of stone and the depth of the now submerged causeway which lies in up to 3 metres of water, it is probable that the islet once supported an Atlantic roundhouse but it appears the majority of stone was pulled down and used as part of the substantial revetment that is currently visible (fig. 6.6).

6.3.5 Dun(s) Aonais, Ruadh, Mhic Uisdein and unnamed islet, Loch Olabhat, Benbecula

Three occupied islets are clustered in Loch Olabhat[2] which runs in a SE direction for 2.25km and lies approximately 3km from the coast, due west (fig. 6.7). The loch actually consists of a

[2] Not to be confused with Loch Olabhat in North Uist.

complicated landscape of smaller interconnected lochs and contains over a dozen small, perhaps seasonal islets. Within this area, three duns were inspected along with a fourth site which did not show any signs of use although the size and location warranted inspection. Dun(s) Aonais, Dun Ruadh and Mhic Uisdein occupy the northern extent of the loch system . Dun Aonais, (NF75 SE9) contains moderate signs of revetment and two rectilinear foundations approximately 16x8 metres across in total. The islet itself is some 30m in diameter and clearly has a substantial artificial component. The structures atop the site are simple in design, with a single thickness of stonework that only rises for several courses. Excavation is required to discern any more detail about the site. A prominent causeway extends east to the shore. Dun Ruadh (NF75 SE8) some 250m east of Dun Aonais appears to have a submerged 'breakwater' radiating from the SE segment of the site, terminating after leading several metres into the loch. No visible surface evidence provided signs of man-made structures. A small unnamed islet 100m south of Dun Ruadh was examined underwater and above but revealed no signs of artificial reinforcement or archaeological activity on the surface. Dun Ruadh was also heavily obscured and had less revetting but nonetheless has a visible artificial element. An attempt was made to locate Dun Mhic Uisdein, however, the landscape around the area was equal parts loch and bog; aerial photography points to an islet near the A865 causeway which indicates large amounts of visible stone in no discernible pattern, but could not be reached during the survey. The location of these sites in close proximity denotes an area of intensity in the past and would have afforded easy access to the sea before any later drainage works in the 19th century. Again, the distribution in Western Benbecula of islets is almost equidistant, yet any concept of intervisibility is not easily validated, although the terrain rarely exceeds 10m OD in any direction until east of the A865 with bisects the island north to south.

6.3.6 Dun Hermidale

Dun Hermidale (NF 85 SW6), is the only site on Benbecula listed by Armit as a walled islet and appears to be of Medieval or later use (fig. 6.8). The 'dun' as it is termed by the RCAHMS is actually a natural island within 6m of the shore but contains a substantial tumble of stone that appears to be imported to the islet. The location is situated in a strikingly bleak, perpetually boggy landscape of low rolling hills that rarely exceed more than 20m above sea-

Figure 6.7 *Duns located in Loch Olabhat, Benbecula: Dun Aonais, Dun Ruadh and Dun Mhic Uisdein.*

level. As one walks east this steadily yields to an increasing amount of lochs which in turn give way to Loch Uisgeabhagh, a large sea loch that extends deep into the eastern half of the island. The only relief is Ruabhal, which at 126m OD dominates the immediate landscape and is in fact the highest point on the island, a feature that certainly drew attention to this part of Benbecula in prehistory before blanket peats completely encapsulated the underlying terrain. This former landscape survives as a concealed stratum some 50-60cm below surface, only visible either where peat cutting or erosion has removed the top surface. Throughout this region, numerous competing outcrops of Lewisian Gneiss protrude slightly above the encroaching peats, indicating the vast quantity that formerly lay exposed as building material for prehistoric inhabitants in what today would be considered a barren landscape. Several unique characteristics exist in regards to Dun Hermidale which differentiates it from other occupied islets: the walling appears to extend only around the segment facing the shore although aerial photos indicate what indicates more walling around the entire site. Another aspect is the close location to the shore, less than 10 metres,

which makes it one of the most accessible island duns from this perspective. This likely explains the substantial layer of rubble which confronts any visitor to the site; if not for defensive purposes it clearly was meant to control access and demarcate a strict boundary. Observations on 24-07-2009 indicate a low (>.5m) stone revetment surviving along the shore facing section of the island but no outright evidence of an internal structure again due to vegetation. The location of the site would suggest an association with pastoral activity in the surrounding landscape although the islet itself is awkwardly sited for use as a shieling or croft. Very little is known besides earlier evidence for internal structures (RCAHMS 1928, no. 363), a partially remaining wall on the causewayed side and possible evidence of internal cellular features. A final noteworthy aspect of this site is its close relationship next to the highest point (Rubhal) on Benbecula – a preference also commonly seen on North Uist (*see* Ch. 6). When atop Rubhal, Dun Hermidale is visible from the crest of the hill while unhindered views across the east coast of Benbecula are unrivalled anywhere else on the island. The general location of Dun Hermidale is remote and largely void today of human activity, with the exception of several Neolithic chambered cairns to the west. Considering the quick access to Rubhal at the northern end of the loch, it stands to reason that the site may have much to say about early prehistoric settlement in the area.

6.3.7 Dun Borosdale, Benbecula NF75SE7

Dun Borosdale or 'Borasdail', (NF75 SE7) is unique in the Uists in that it is the only known site which is now completely submerged (fig. 6.9). It was last recorded as being visible on the 1915 OS map, although this probably stems from earlier versions. On 24-07-2009 I visited the loch and relocated the submerged site after making a series of snorkel transects. The causeway is large, even by Hebridean standards, utilising stones up to 2 metres in length and extends some 80 metres or more to the site, with a slight 'S' curve and stands over 1.5 metres at the maximum. The highest point of the substantial causeway was approximately a metre below the surface while the majority was in 2 to 3 metres of water although the depth at the mid-point suggests missing or silt covered courses. The site is 15-17m in diameter on top, consisting of what appeared as unconsolidated rubble yet completely void of aquatic plants which afforded a clear view of stonework. However, the water visibility was 1.5 to 2 metres maximum with a dark tint from the peaty nature of the water. Evidence of substantial

Figure 6.8 *Dun Hermidale and view from Ruabhal, this highest peak on Benbecula. Dun Hermidale is visible in the distance.*

walling on the north-east segment indicates promise for future work yet SCUBA is required to investigate this as prolonged breath-hold diving to any appreciable depth below two metres was difficult without stirring up silts. The islet itself appears to be at least outwardly artificial though this may conceal a natural reef or base. Initial observation strongly suggests an Iron Age origin, and based upon the amount of stone and evidence of walling some two metres in width, can be considered a possible complex Atlantic roundhouse. The highest point of the dun reaches within 1-1.3m of the surface (fig. 6.10) yet standing on the

stonework releases a cloud of fine sediment and organic matter which immediately destroys any remaining visibility. A proposed survey in 2010 was cancelled due to hazardous conditions brought on by a high water table. This created a rippling layer of blanket peat which had to be traversed before reaching open water. This fragile covering of peat was easily broken through over water exceeding two metres in depth.

On 16-06-2010, after a laborious 1.5 hour walk covering only 850m, one swim to the site was made using mask and snorkel as the weight of the scuba gear prevented me from safely carrying it to the loch's edge. Although the site was relocated, water visibility was poor in 2010, well under 1m and averaging closer to 30cm. The walling seen in 2009 was briefly re-examined before silts obscured it, revealing some 4-5 courses of upstanding stonework .8m in height and extending to within 1.3m of the loch surface. Although hopes were placed on providing a detailed plan of this site, it can be said that it consists of a circular, completely artificial island (although perhaps overlying a natural reef) approximately 20m in diameter and connected to the former shore by a causeway some 60-70m in length lying submerged in up to 3m of water. All stones visible on the crannog were small enough to be lifted by a single person in good health (<70cm/dia.) with the exception of several large causeway stones noted in 2009. I have chosen the term 'lifted' as I feel boats or rafts of some construction were the obvious manner in which to transport and drop stones during crannog construction. Due to the rising loch level brought on by blanket peats obscuring the loch drain, Dun Borosdale has remained virtually beyond the reach of human activity, and apparently will remain so in the foreseeable future unless large-scale drainage occurs. This site is also notable in that it likely reflects the environmental processes still at work in the Outer Hebrides since the disappearance of glaciers c.10,000BP. As Loch Borosdale is <2km from the west coast of Benbecula and is less than 2m above sea-level, it is effectively on the 'front line' of this subsidence process. It can be stated that it is highly unlikely natural processes will re-expose the island.

The landscape surrounding Loch Borasdail, in the NW area of Benbecula, is heavily covered with lochs, disproportionate even by Hebridean standards, and lacks much in the way of stable ground without drainage efforts. Within a 2.5km radius of Dun Borasdail, the

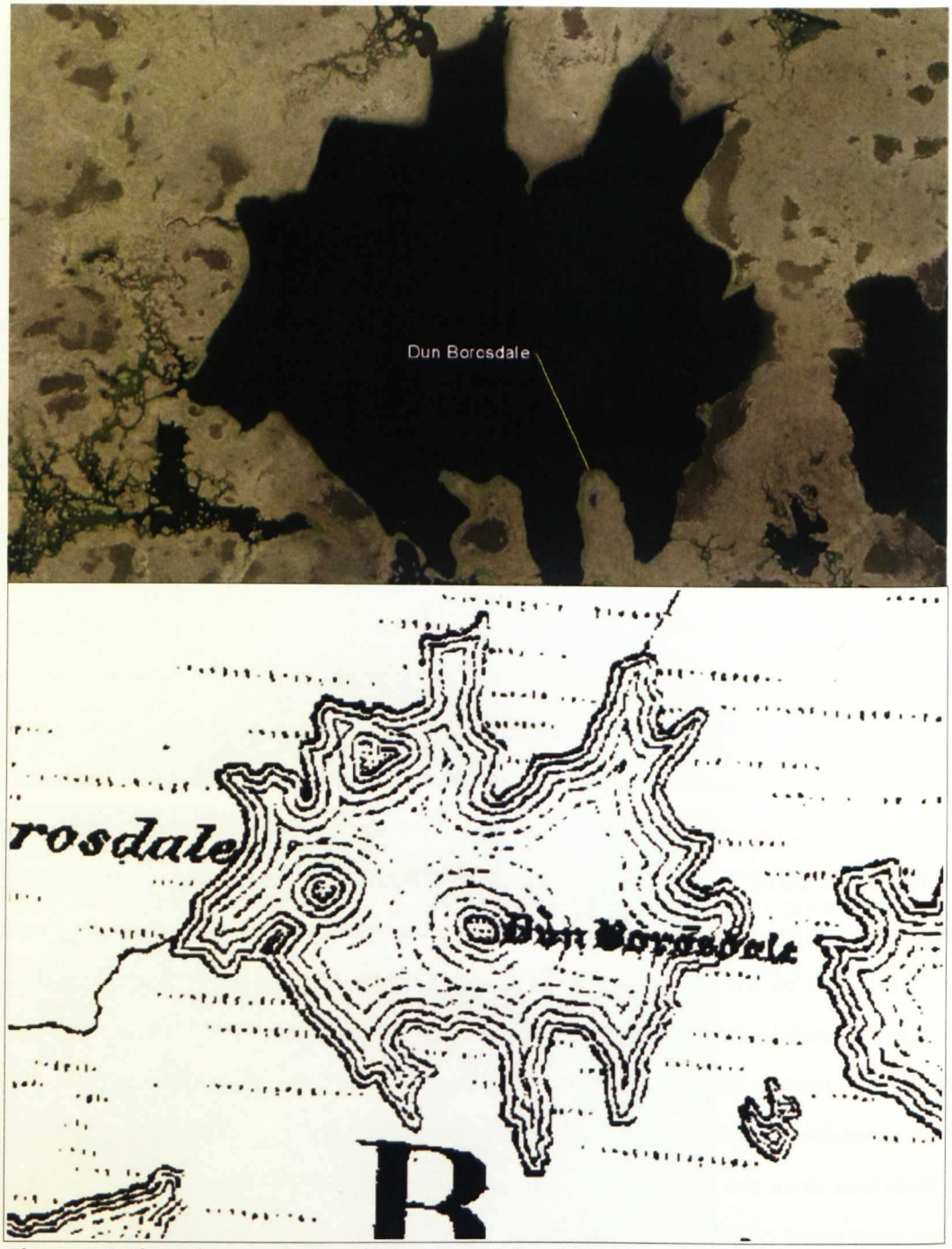


Figure 6.9 *The submerged site of Dun Borosdale which was relocated during the 2009 field season and found to contain visible walling.*

prehistoric landscape is similarly revealing in that no less than 8 other islet duns are known while the nearest terrestrial sites of immediate prehistoric importance are two chambered cairns which likely predate the island duns on a small rise (30m OD) immediately to the SW of Ruabhal (124m OD) the highest point on the island. While remaining undiscovered islet and terrestrial sites no doubt exist within the area, this preference for artificial islets, at least in later prehistory, is unmistakable as a primary form of construction whether intended for

seasonal or permanent use. In many ways, this is representative of the Uists as a whole, as remaining evidence for domestic dwellings prior to the Norse incursion are predominately sited on islets with the exceptions of Bronze Age sites such as Cladh Hallam and later prehistoric wheelhouses situated along the machairs which predominate along the west coast. From the interest of a distributional perspective is nearby Eilean Iain (NF75 SE6), 800m NE. This walled islet 31m in diameter contains a very clear boat harbour on the west side and three oval stone foundations. The site is connected to shore by a (now) submerged causeway that was only slightly visible during the 1915 RCAHMS survey. Although the visible upstanding remains appear to be Medieval or later in nature, they may well overlie earlier deposits, a common occurrence given the re-use of occupied islands throughout Scotland, and may have acted alongside Dun Borosdale as a satellite to the now-destroyed coastal 'Complex Atlantic Roundhouse' Dun Torcusay in the prehistoric landscape.

6.4 South Uist

6.4.1 Introduction

There are at least 35 island dwellings on South Uist (fig. 6.11), 27 are listed by the RCAHMS as 'duns' while only seven are listed as crannogs. Armit's gazetteer contains 19 Atlantic roundhouse islets, 4 walled islets and 7 miscellaneous islets are noted by Armit in South Uist (1992: Appendix 3). At the far northern extent of South Uist two lochs, Loch an Duin Buidhe and Loch Dun na Buail' uachdraich contain two known and up to three suspected islet dwellings within a 300metre radius indicating an intensive degree of prehistoric occupation. Within the first loch, Dun Buidhe, Ardnamonie, (NF 7735 4629), lies in an area of semi-drained marshland and is believed to have traces of a gallery with walls some 3.5m in thickness, external structures and a causeway (RCAHMS no. 373). Evidence of a lintel exists; however the doorway was blocked as of 1915 by debris. Upon inspection, the 'loch' on the OS map is actually covered by a thin layer of blanket peat and great care must be taken to approach the site as the peat ripples in all directions at the slightest pressure. Clear evidence of walling exists while the interior is a substantial tumble of stone. In the loch immediately to the east, Dun na Buail' uachdraich survives as a turfed over mound with a small quantity of stone visible. The nature of the mound and the obvious placement of stone strongly suggests a dun but evidence for a broch in insufficient without excavation.

Figure 6.10 *Author standing atop Dun Borosdale.*

The intensity of activity within this area highlights the importance of Iochdar in later prehistory and it is notable that no excavations have taken place here although two bronze swords were discovered in the immediate area during peat cutting in the early 19th century (Anderson 1879:365). The land currently supports grazing cattle and sheep, and many, if not all of the drystone structures associated with this use including dykes, are re-used from pre-existing material which was undoubtedly abundant here. It is suggested that a systematic excavation of the area would certainly reveal much about the use of the landscape yet the impact of recent activity within the past two centuries has undeniably had a negative effect upon the remaining sites. The majority of island duns on South Uist have only been recorded by the RCAHMS and have received very little attention in the past eight decades beyond this fieldwork with one other exception (Raven and Shelly 2005). Dun Loch an Daill, Carnan, (NF74NE 8) is simply noted by a 'deeply submerged' causeway and piles of stone rubble which perhaps indicate a roundhouse (RCAHMS no. 417; Armit 1992: 158). As with numerous sites, no archaeologists have inspected Dun Loch an Daill. Dun Buidhe, Loch Druidibeag (NF73NE 5) also contains a ruinous roundhouse some 31m dia. which cursorily

indicates a probable Iron Age structure and was briefly mentioned by Blundell (1913: 295). Dun Altabrug (NF73SW 5) appears to contain a substantial circular Atlantic roundhouse with 3-4m wide walls with an unusual north-easterly entrance and is also of likely Iron Age origin.

6.4.2 The 'Iochdar' Complex, South Uist

Inland from the NW coast of South Uist, and approximately 200-300m from the channel which divides Benbecula and South Uist is the modern day settlement of *Iochdar* or 'low place'. This small settlement is situated at the northern tip of Loch Bí where it empties into the sea; concentrated just south of the main road are a series of lochs that are heavily covered in encroaching blanket peats (fig. 6.12). Depicted as open water on OS maps, they are not easily spotted and care must be taken when walking across the actively rolling peat surface covering an unknown depth of water although the loch level appears to be artificially lowered. Aerial photos are of crucial importance when examining this landscape which contains the scattered remains of up to six island duns: Dun na Buail uachdraich (NF74NE 5; RCAHMS no. 374) with two possible additions in the same loch: Dun Beag and Dun Mor. To the south lies Dun Uisealan (NF74NE 6; RCAHMS no. 376). Also within this landscape another possible dun was recorded as a 'cairn' due to the dilapidated state, Clachan, Ard Na Monadh (NF74NE3; RCAHMS no. 433), which is clearly visible in aerial photos (figure xx) as the circular islet to the right.

Examining the area on foot as it is now mostly bog, the initial realisation is that the sites in mention have all been badly robbed of stone to the point of obliteration. This is clear in the RCAHMS report but regardless the greatest importance of this area is the insight into intensity and distribution in late prehistoric Uist. In lieu of relative dates or excavation, we are forced to reply upon early investigations with little or no data and local place name traditions. The suspected broch Dun Buidhe does contain at least one intra-mural gallery identifying it as an Atlantic roundhouse while the other sites can only be noted. The discovery of two bronze swords while cutting peat in the mid-19th century 100m N of the duns were tentatively dated to c.550BC[3] and were regarded as suspected votive offerings. The scarcity of finds of this nature likely alludes to the use and importance of Iochdar in prehistory while the number or density of sites cannot be simply ascribed to discovery by intrusive modern activity. The nearby 'cairn' at Clachan may benefit from the removal of

[3] Anderson 1879; Coles 1962; Chapter 4 above

Figure 6.11 *All occupied islets on Benbecula.*

Figure 6.12 *The 'Iochdar Complex' of both listed and suspected sites in the largely drained area of South Uist. Former islets can be seen as circular mounds.*

vegetation to expose traces of the foundation, and any evidence of activity in the interior as it is most likely a dun given the islet location.

6.4.3 Dun Raghhnaill or 'Raouill' and Caistle Bheagram, South Uist

Two medieval or post-medieval island dwellings were also inspected. First, Dun Raghhnaill (NF73NE3) in the western extent of Loch Drudibeg or 'large loch of the druids' is situated on a reinforced natural islet some 70m from the south shore of the loch (fig 6.13). The site is readily visible on the approach as the walls are a stark contrast to the surrounding landscape. Close inspection of the underwater area of the islet did not reveal evidence of a causeway as the loch is quite deep (over 5m) however stones protruding from the loch towards the natural islet 70m to the NW may suggest some type of approach existed. There is a large semi-artificial underwater platform, some 6x9m, adjacent to the western wall of the castle and submerged to a depth of approximately 1m, which could have served as a boat landing. Situated close to the entrance, this landing would be practical for several large boats. Local tradition holds that it was an early stronghold of the Clanranald, (Raghhnaill equates to Ranald in English although the modern name does not reflect this) and was first mentioned in documents in the early 16th century. The castle, some 21x13m, is a linear drystone structure which does not appear to have any circular foundations, yet is known locally as a dun, with a NE opening entrance which accesses two rooms via a long corridor

(fig. 1.21). 3m from the entrance in 1m of water a small *craggan* vessel was discovered lying on the loch bed which showed evidence of cooking use, yet this type of vessel is difficult to typologically date.

Raven states both Dun Raouill and the nearby Castle Bheagram do not have any prehistoric occupation (Raven 2005: 349). Although the lack of rubble or inserted material into circular shells is immediately noticeable, this simply is not discernible without excavation as the stone could have easily been completely altered to suit the later post-Norse style that came to dominate. Re-use of prehistoric islets is well documented in the Western Isles as more recent physical evidence from the islets testifies: Dun Buidhe, Dun Tomaidh, Dun Scolpaig, Berigh, Riof, Eilean Maelit and Dun Eilean Iain, to name but a few. Subsequently, sites such as Dun an Sticer, Dun Ban and Dun Cnoc a' Buidhe indicate internal restructuring; this is especially obvious where linear walling has been inserted within the circular perimeter. The later use of sites such as Dun Raouill and Castle Bheagram is perhaps significant as they were located along primary pastoral routes that also may have served as corridors to the east coast and subsequently the mainland (*ibid*: 350). When viewed from higher ground in 2009, Dun Raouill and Castle Bheagram are both visible while interior waterways would have linked them in the recent past before drainage isolated Loch Druidibeag from the sea.

6.4.4 Barra

Barra was not investigated during the field seasons, yet it is important to briefly discuss the nature of islet settlement here. Although Barra has been the subject of recent terrestrial survey (Branigan and Foster: 2002) no underwater excavation or survey results have been published. Five islet-based Atlantic roundhouses are noted by Armit on Barra with no other islet sites mentioned (1992: 199). Dun Loch an Duin, (NF 694 032) is a galleried site that is now submerged due to damming of the loch using stones from the site (RCAHMS 1928: no. 445). If visibility is sufficient this may be a productive site to examine due to a lack of vegetation. Dun Loch nic Ruaidhe, (NF 7025 0188), is noted as being inaccessible by Armit for unknown reasons (1992: 162) yet did receive mention by Young although it was described as being in ruinous condition (1955:292). Several other probable inhabited islets were in close proximity, yet were not inspected due to lack of access without a boat and were not mentioned in RCAHMS reports. These may prove to be productive sites due to the

remote location and lack of human activity upon the island in general. Two small tidal islets 480m apart are located on the northern channel to South Uist contain the remains of duns: Bay Hirivagh (NF70 SW1) and North Bay Hirivagh (NF70 SW2).

6.5 North Uist

6.5.1 North Uist: Density

This research has demonstrated North Uist contains, by a considerable margin, the highest density of island dwellings in Scotland (fig. 6.14). Placed into context, Dumfries and Galloway is generally regarded as having one of the highest concentrations in Scotland (Cavers 2006: 52) Here, 64 island dwellings are within an expanse of 6,246km^2, or one site per 97.59km^2, while North Uist contains at least 80 sites within 300km^2, or one site for every 3.75km^2, 26 times the density of Dumfries and Galloway. For hypothetical comparison, if no other island dwellings existed outside North Uist, the entire Western Isles (at 3,070km^2) would still contain over twice the density of island settlements as Dumfries and Galloway. This realisation underscores a considerable disparity within Scottish island dwelling studies, most notably between mainland and Hebridean sites.

This fundamental calculation has never been made in over a century and a half of research, now revealing that over 65% of later prehistoric sites on North Uist are located on small islets. This indicates that during much of later prehistory and the first millennium AD, island dwellings were the preferred form of settlement in North Uist, even generously accounting for 'lost' machair and hinterland sites. The physical boundaries of North Uist, as with any island, also present an opportunity to approach the area as a naturally defined entity rather than to create arbitrary boundaries which are prone to numerous subjective criteria. The lengthy island dwelling chronology in North Uist begins with the Neolithic island sites (*see* 5.3, above) of Eilean Domhnuill (Armit 2003) and Eilean an Tighe (Scott 1950); arguably continuing today with modern homes built on tidal islets on Grimsay. The sum of this density and chronology create an ideal representation of the Scottish island dwelling tradition. This is based upon the extent to which island dwellings played an inherent part of daily life throughout the landscape for millennia. To fully appreciate the impact which island dwellings have had upon past societies in North Uist, it is important to understand the complexities of the landscape.

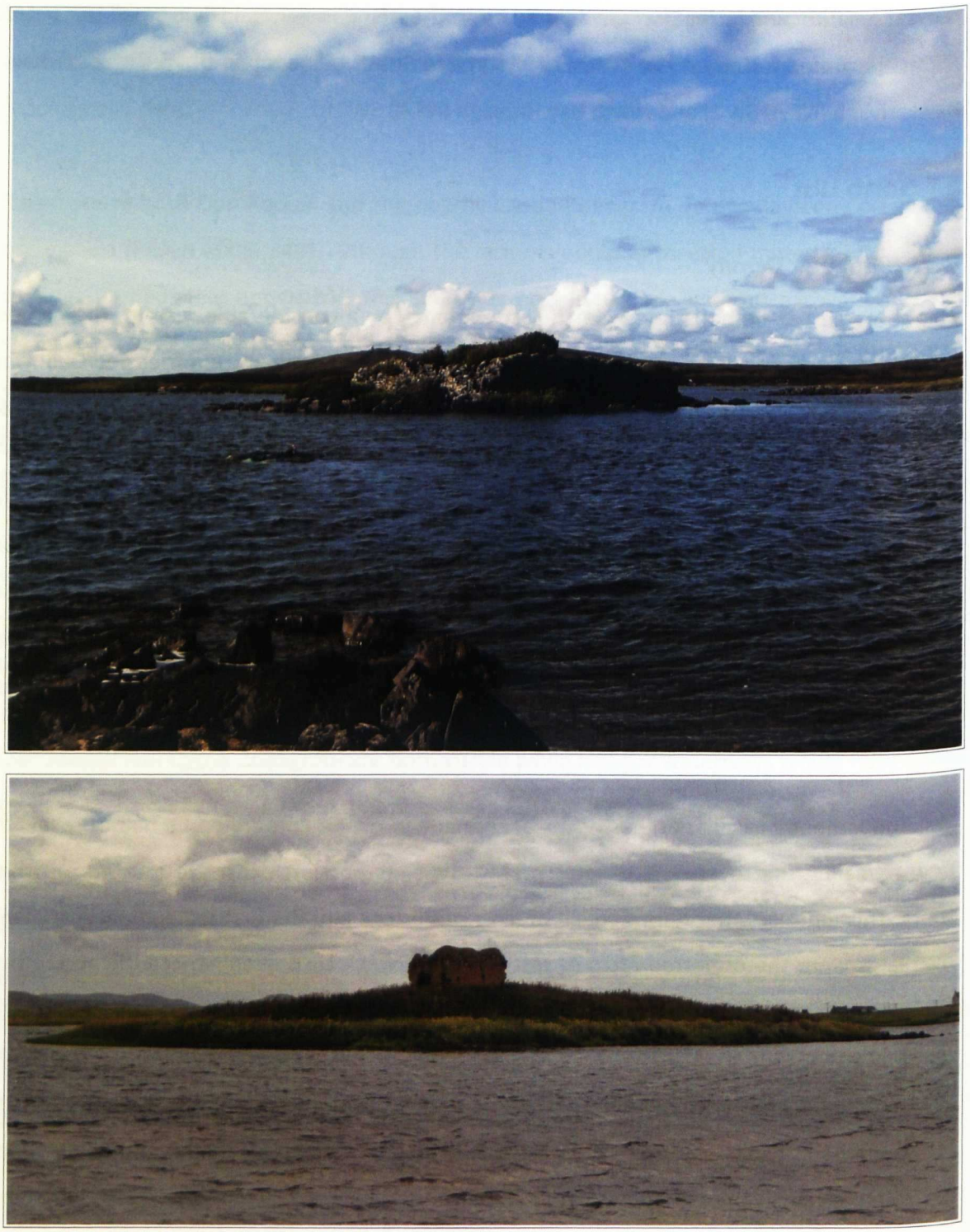


Figure 6.13 *Dun Raouill and Castle Bheagram, South Uist.*

Islet-based archaeology aside, North Uist has not been investigated in any detail since the 1915 efforts of Royal Commission surveyors (RCAHMS 1928). A large factor behind this pronounced absence became readily apparent during the 2010 field season, as sites on North Uist can be very difficult to access in comparison to previously examined sites on Benbecula and South Uist. This is partially due to environmental conditions which have

witnessed an increase in blanket peats and bog since the Neolithic Period, however the main factor is simply the number of lochs which must be negotiated. Many island dwellings on North Uist cannot be reached by any other means than a lengthy, often convoluted approach walk while attempting to transport scuba cylinders and survey gear. In retrospect, the best option for many sites would be by sea in a small motorboat and then further by foot while portaging a smaller inflatable boat. The only other alternatives, which would have been employed by Erskine Beveridge some 100 years ago when transporting his heavy plate camera, was by row-boat, horse or using porters. Indeed, Beveridge himself remarked 'It may be safely asserted that no part of Scotland has been more self-contained and difficult of approach than the island of North Uist' (1911:138). Around the same time, Murray and Pullar, with an unrivalled knowledge and intimacy of over 600 lochs after completing a bathymetric survey using a small rowboat and leadline, had this to say about Loch Scadavay:

> *There is probably no other loch in Britain which approaches Loch Scadavay in irregularity and complexity of outline. It is an extraordinary labyrinth of narrow channels, bays, promontories and islands...very many [islands] stud the surface (1908: 188).*

This watery landscape which typifies North Uist (fig. 6.15) has real implications for survey and especially excavation further burdened with the equipment necessary for underwater work. The two intrepid surveyors relate how Loch Scadavay was rarely over 2-3m in depth and conjectured that lowering the loch level by 2m would create perhaps a dozen smaller lochs, while raising it an equal amount would drastically increase size by incorporating four already significant lochs nearby (*ibid*: 188). From an environmental standpoint, factors behind loch-level change are notoriously difficult to track in relation to occupation patterns in North Uist. External forces include 'isostatic rebound' as mainland Scotland still slowly rises today, albeit unevenly, from glacial retreat after the last vestiges of the ice age withdrew some 10,000 years ago marking the start of the Holocene.

The removal of vast ice sheets allowed the British mainland to slowly spring back after being pushed into the earth's crust by the weight. Today, this uplift has the effect of pushing the Western Isles down due to a geological fault in the Minch which acts as a giant lever. This has tremendous consequences for low-lying areas of the Western Isles. Considering that approximately half of North Uist is covered by water provides some sense of how the environment can (and does) have a strong influence upon human action by affecting human movement patterns. This environmentally deterministic view does not hold wide support in

Figure 6.14 *North Uist: the highest concentration of island dwellings in Scotland – largely due to the watery landscape here.*

current archaeological theories which tend to place more emphasis on human agency, yet the proliferation of lochs clearly suggests otherwise.

6.5.2 Spatial distribution and 'Rationale' behind location

A landscape approach provides the basis for examining the rationale of island dwelling placement in North Uist, with a view to theoretical developments that can also be applied to other areas of the Western Isles and potentially mainland sites. There are several primary reasons why placement and a spatial examination of island dwellings on North Uist can help

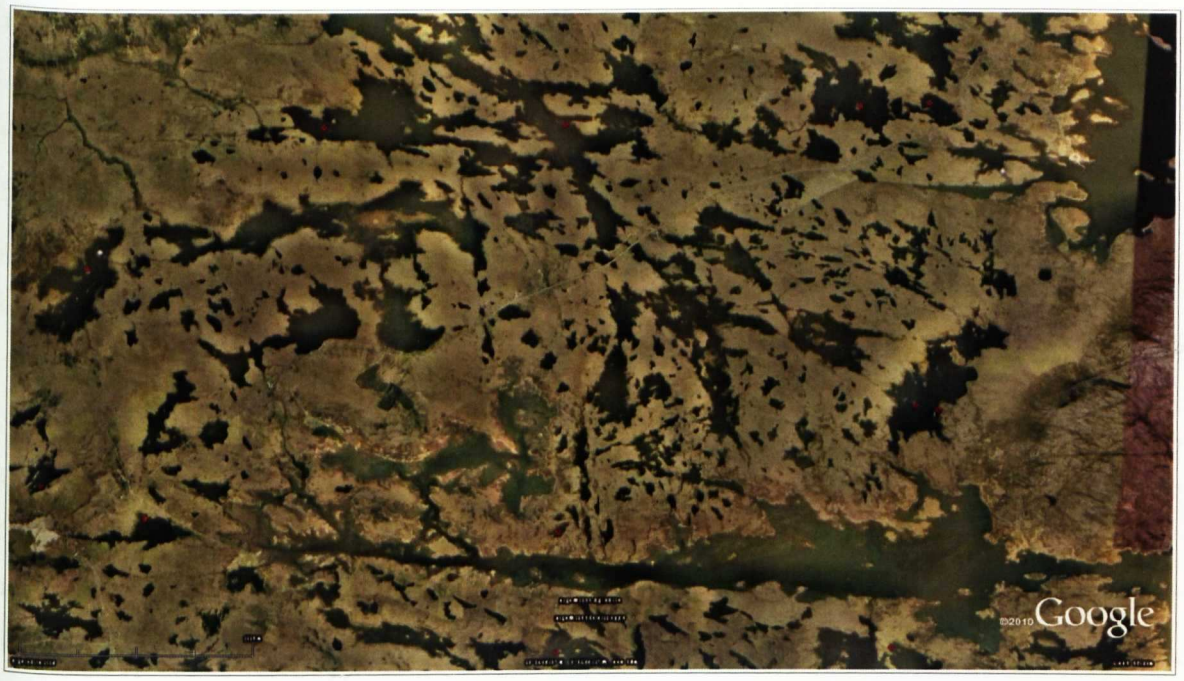


Figure 6.15 *Loch Scadavay and Loch Euphort, North Uist: half water, half land.*

expose the fundamental thought-processes involved with creating an island dwelling. To begin by stating the obvious, this is dictated by the abundance of watery places on North Uist - a direct example of what might be termed 'environmental possibilism'. The myriad of potential locations in a loch-riddled landscape would have provided prehistoric and Medieval builders with a largely unconstrained choice of location. There are literally hundreds of small islands in and around North Uist; only a small west-central portion of the island is completely absent of lochs. This flexibility of location on offer subsequently provides an opportunity to study the rationale behind the choices of location in relation to site use or significance. Instead of the environment dictating and influencing human action, there is such a high number of small islands that the pendulum effectively swings the other way by allowing human agency to work largely unrestrained.

Here, research using field survey, underwater survey, aerial photography, OS mapping, Pastmap and Canmore databases indicates a spatial patterning of island dwellings throughout North Uist which allows for sites to be approached within two distinct frameworks which might be termed *landmark/ancestral* island dwellings and *maritime/waterway* island dwellings. First, landmark/ancestral sites tend to be clustered (<1km) near prominent peaks and higher areas (>100m OD) and pre-existing nodal points in the landscape such as chambered cairns. Secondly, maritime/waterway sites, as the name

suggests, have either direct sea access, or access to the maze of inland waterways that dominate much of North Uist, primarily on the east and south coast. Many sites such as Loch Iosal an Duin or Dun an t-Siamain possess both characteristics. 'Outliers' located in coastal positions, such as Dun Mhic Laitheann, control access to the interior or sheltered anchorages, and offer easy access to marine resources. The topography of North Uist can summarily be described as predominately flat, averaging less than 20m OD, interspersed with prominent individual peaks or small ridge-lines which range between 100 and 350m OD. While dwarfed in comparison by numerous mainland Scottish mountains over 900m, popularly known as Munros, these smaller examples on North Uist nevertheless afford views well out into the Atlantic or to the mainland on a clear day. Therefore, the most repetitive and striking feature of non-maritime/waterway island dwelling location in North Uist is a close proximity to the interspersed peaks dotting the island which consequently afford wide views to both the sea and the hinterland. Besides simply having nice views, these locations are crucially typified by arable, better drained soils. Correspondingly, these landmarks are visible from much of this low-lying island terrain and just as importantly, from the sea as well. This view is reinforced by seven examples of site clusters below:

1. Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn, Loch Na Dubcha, Dun Mhic Laitheann and Loch na Caiginn, along with the suspected site of Loch na Cointich are located next to Crogarry, Portain peninsula at 154m OD which overlooks the east coast towards Skye. Loch na Cointich was not conclusively located in 2010 but two sites in particular are suspect and require both underwater and walk-over inspection (fig. 6.17).

2. Loch Iosal an Duin and Dun An Sticer straddle opposite sides of Beinn Breac (148m OD), a small hill yet prominent enough to afford sweeping views of the Sound of Harris and across the Minch towards Skye, 32km distant (discussed below).

3. Loch Hunder and Dun Ban are located at the foot of Li a Deas, at 281m OD a substantial landmark also prominent along the east coast. (fig. 6.16).

4. Eight sites surround Eabhal at 347m OD, the highest point on North Uist: Loch Obisary I-IV, Dun An t-Siamain, Loch A'Gheadais and Eilean Na H-Iolaire I and II (fig. 6 Eight sites surround Eabhal at 347m OD, the highest point on North Uist: Loch Obisary I-IV, Dun an t-Siamain, Loch A'Gheadais and Eilean Na H-Iolaire I and II (fig. 6.16).

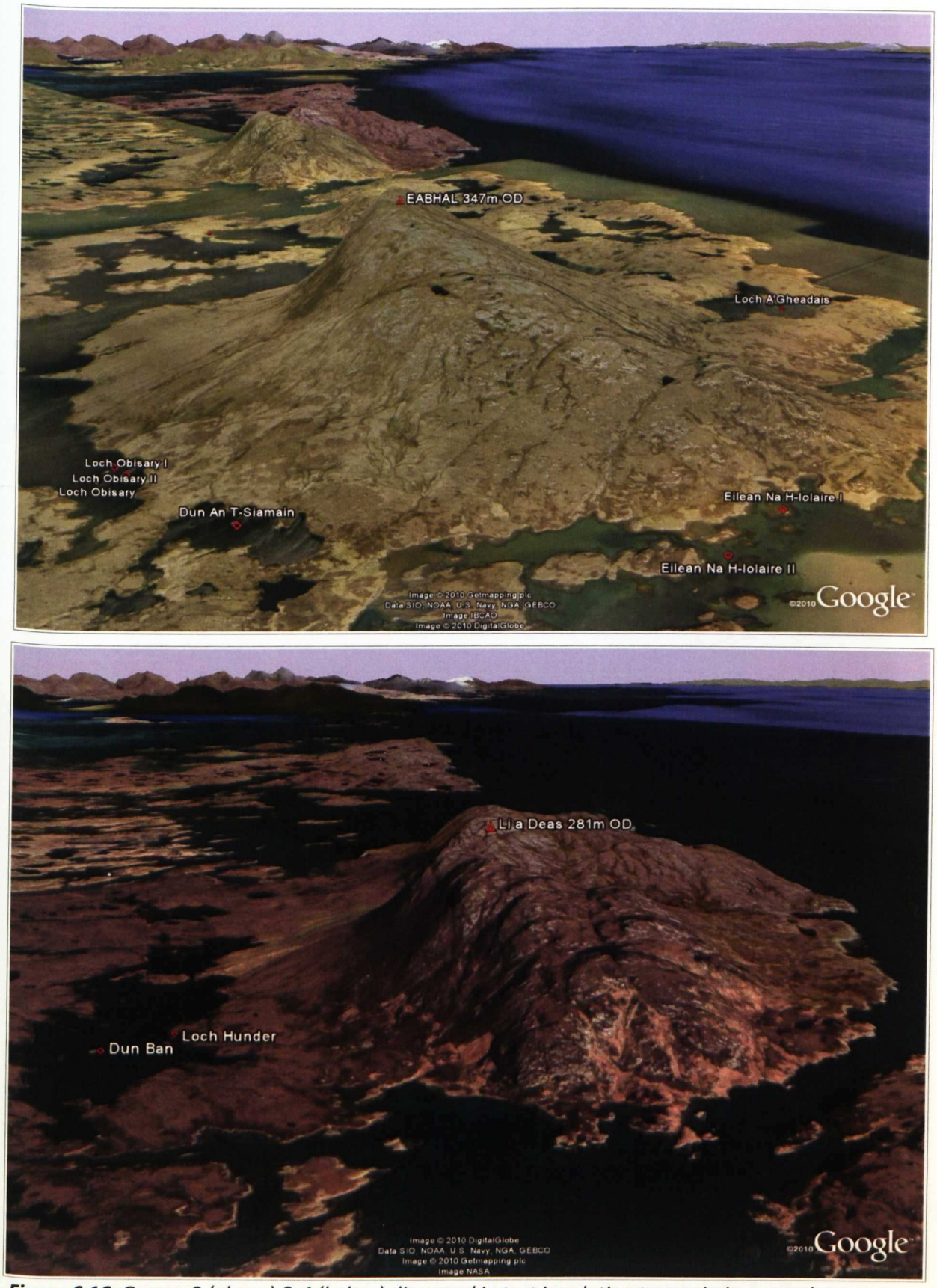


Figure 6.16 *Groups 3 (above) & 4 (below) discussed in text in relation to proximity to peaks.*

5. Dun Eashader is located adjacent to the west flank of Sgurr an Duin (110m OD) overlooking the coastal complex of sites centred upon Vallay.

6. Unival (140m OD) stands as a prominent feature with Dun Ban, Loch Huna (NF86NW3) located below on the eastern flank having views towards the Atlantic Ocean and Saint Kilda, some 78 km distant. Dun Ban is located immediately at the base and an unidentified islet with apparent archaeological features spotted on aerial photographs lies 164m NNE.

7. Finally, the peaks Marri, Crogarry Beag and Crogarry Mor, at 170m, 140m and 180m respectively, are flanked by no less than ten sites: Dun Aonais, Loch Nan Geireann, Dun na Mairhbe, Oban Trumaisgearraidh, Dun Torcuill, Dunan Dubh, Loch an Duin, Loch Bru, Loch Fada and Loch Blashaval.

6.5.3 Example One: Crogarry Group Discussion

This group of sites encapsulates the range and variety of different forms in the Western Isles including the 'classic' Atlantic Roundhouse architecture of Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn, the now ruinous Loch Na Dubcha, the partially-walled sea islet Dun Mhic Laitheann, Loch na Caiginn with substantial clachan walling, and finally the suspected site of Loch na Cointich. These island dwellings are located at the base of Crogarry, Portain peninsula at 154m which overlooks the east coast towards Skye. Crogarry itself is part of a raised headland containing an 'L' shaped ridge which extends from the summit some 1.3x1.6km. Situated immediately below this ridge are three sites: Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn (NF97SE4), Loch na Dubcha (NF97SE 3) and Loch na Caginn (NF97SE 2). Starting with the least understood site, Loch na Dubcha exists as a 12m/dia. islet connected by a poorly preserved causeway 52m in length (Beveridge 1911: 152). Beveridge named the site 'Dun Bru' as no local knowledge of the site could be found. The loch has a slight tidal fluctuation but the variation here is minimal given the distance from open water. The nature of the site suggests a later prehistoric origin yet without intrusive investigations no further information can be gleaned from this small islet. At Loch na Caginn, a more informed picture is available (fig. 6.18). The broad causeway virtually forms a promontory on the west shore of the loch, being very broad in approach and contains robust stonework surviving largely as tumble with a striking cross-wall at the islet end of the causeway which flanks the entrance for 10m on either side.

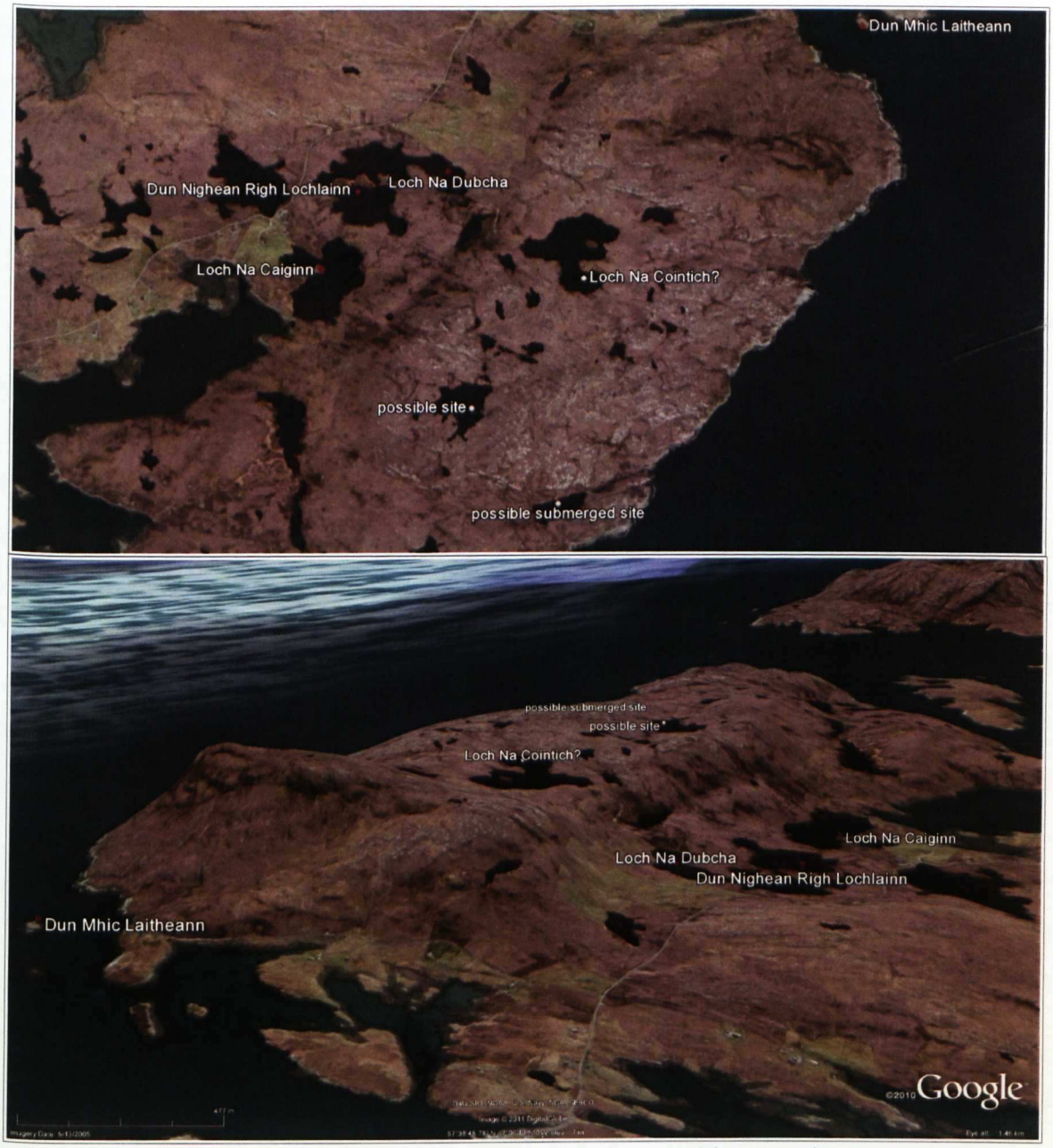


Figure 6.17 *Group 1 spatial distribution in relation to high ground (Crogarry).*

The cross-wall today stands approximately 1m high, quite possibly it has been modified to prevent sheep from accessing the islet. The island itself measures approximately 50x45m and is connected by a 26m causeway. As Beveridge notes, Medieval use (or more likely reuse) has obliterated any upstanding prehistoric remains, yet the interior contains distinct cellular divisions and a small central rectangular depression lined with stone (fig.) Initial impressions are reminiscent of a grave shaft as its diminutive size prevents it from serving as even a rudimentary shelter. Without turf removal it is difficult to elaborate further on the walling around the site, but the quantity of imported stone points to the former presence of a formidable structure. The third site, Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn translated as 'The Fort of

the Daughter of the King of Norway' (Beveridge 1911: 146) stands as the best preserved later prehistoric monument on the Portain Peninsula (fig. 6.19). This 'island dun' exists as an almost perfectly circular Atlantic roundhouse whose walling (1.6m in height) runs directly into the loch giving it a very distinct appearance as if rising directly out of the loch. As the water level was an estimated 30cm lower than the seasonal norm, details of the island itself were visible. Upon closer underwater inspection, the substructure was found to be an artificial construction, composing sub-angular boulders averaging 30-75cm with several larger examples. An extensive examination of the surrounding lochbed revealed a large field of boulders in c.1.5-3m of water extending to the NW of the island for approximately 20m; these stones appear to be imported as it contrasts with the remainder of the lochbed which was overall void of any further stones, rather comprising a silty layer of unknown thickness. The group of boulders does not form any coherent structure and is too dispersed to be a harbour yet appears distinct from the surrounding lochbed.

The remaining area surrounding the island was relatively shallow, c.2m in depth, yet when continuing SE past the island some 10m the loch dramatically deepens to over 10m; the bottom could not be located. The first underwater circuit around the island indicated a moderately extensive scatter of later prehistoric pottery (*see* 6.6 below) lying amongst the stone tumble from the roundhouse immediately adjacent to the exterior walling, with a number of pieces lying adjacent to the causeway. While the possibility exists that this assemblage represents accidental deposition (i.e. a fall) by later curio seekers, it is my interpretation that this scatter indicates breakage during a tumble on the part of prehistoric occupants or visitors. The tumbled stone which fills the interior had not been cleared, and it was virtually impossible to reach floor deposits without considerable lifting and clearing which would indicate that the site has not been looted in recent times. There is nothing to suggest that this is any type of votive deposit given that the sherds were distributed in a random manner, hard against the side of the causeway in typically 1m or less of water. If these sherds were broken inside the dwelling, it also does not stand to reason that the occupants should walk halfway to the shore before depositing them along the causeway; simply throwing them out from the entrance would suffice. Away from the causeway, the quantity of pottery visible simply by swimming around the site indicates a substantial amount of ceramic material, some of it highly decorated, coming to the site. I suspect further investigation around the site would continue to reveal the same.

Figure 6.18 *Loch na Caginn in 2010 (top) and c.1911, below (Erskine Beveridge). Boat-shaped feature noted in centre of site (below).*

As Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn is relatively small for an Atlantic Roundhouse at just under 10m in diameter and rests on a substructure 15-16 metres in diameter it likely represents a domicile of some importance in as much as the labour expenditure for this site outweighs any possibility of accommodating a large number of people here. The interior measurements

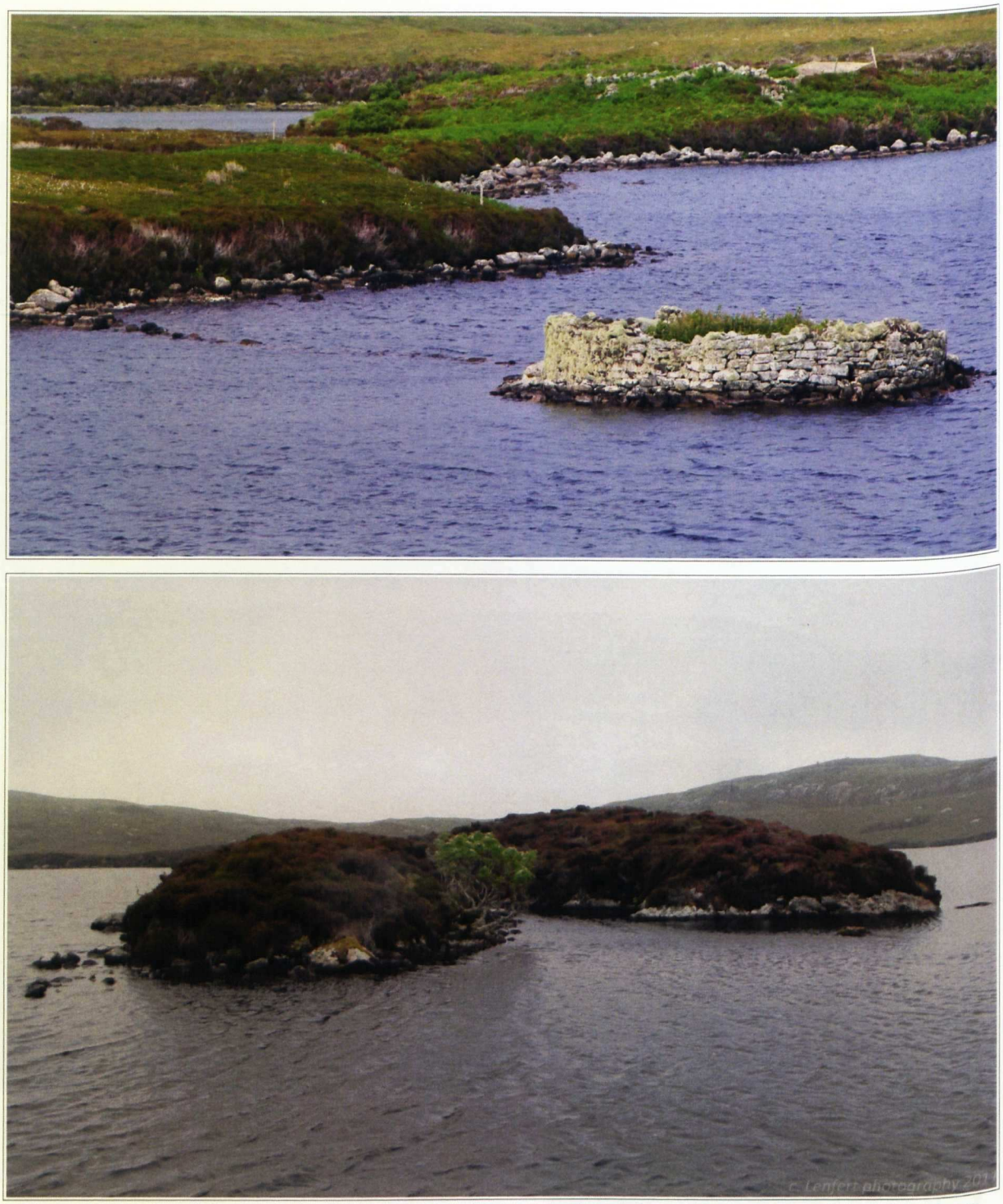


Figure 6.19 *The elaborate Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn (above) and the suspected site of Loch na Cointich, Crogarry Pass.*

were difficult to ascertain given the prolific tumble and vegetation, however segments of interior facing were visible which provided an interior diameter of roughly 5.5m or 23.75m^3, scarcely large enough to host the amount of people needed for not only construction of the dun, but of the island itself. Beveridge (1911:46) noted what appeared to be a singular section of radial walling which hints at the possible presence of a later wheelhouse-style

interior. Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn in particular raises questions regarding the purpose and function of the more elaborate later prehistoric examples of Hebridean island dwellings. This is because the site clearly suggests ulterior roles beyond the prevailing model of mainland crannogs as predominately agricultural homesteads or defensive boltholes (*cf* Dixon 2004; Morrison 1985). In reality, only a relatively small group of *select* people could fit within the walls, while the very compact nature of the site, combined with the intricate walling atop an artificial island and quantity of pottery, clearly suggests Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn was intended for activities and a 'meaning' that is representative beyond what simple functionalist interpretations can offer. I would therefore consider Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn a site that clearly demonstrates elevated status based upon four elements: the construction of an artificial island, build quality, small 'footprint' denoting a limited capacity and amount of pottery found underwater in relation to the site.

The next site shifts the focus to a maritime setting. Dun Mhic Laitheann is situated on a 50x25m natural rocky islet, just offshore of the small island of Groatay bordering Cheese Bay on the NE side of Portain (fig. 6.17). This site is located on the opposite side of the headland across a 240m channel from the mainland and represents an altogether different rationale for island dwelling construction, isolated from any agricultural or grazing lands (except Groatay). Additionally, the fertile sandflats which provide shellfish at low tides, such as Vallay, are nowhere to be seen, only the steep cliff approaches to Portain which rise from the sea. Again, most of the surviving information for this site comes from Beveridge (1911:144-146) who relates how the island was temporarily used to lodge a 40-50 strong group of Cromwell's soldiers around 1653. He also notes that fish-stores were built on nearby Hermetray just prior to this and supposes that the labourers may have stayed at Dun Mhic Laitheann although the island could not be visited in 2010 as it would have required a 300m open water swim (or more logically, a boat) to reach. The dun itself survives as a highly modified setting of what appears to be four cells, separate from one another, with a wall running along the NE section of the island. This again leaves an impression that the site was modified and re-used long after any initial occupation or use would have occurred.

Without any existing or recovered artefactual evidence, little more can unfortunately be said about Dun Mhic Laitheann. However, eight other examples of marine islets exist in the Western Isles have artefactual evidence for prehistoric use, such as Pygmies Isles (NB56

NW4) excavated by MacKenzie (1905: 248) who discovered decorated Neolithic pottery under the floor of a chapel built during the Medieval Period atop the existing prehistoric remains. Eilean Maelit and Dun Thomaidh, both on nearby Vallay strand, along with Oban Skibinish, Dunan Ruadh, Dun Borragio (Harris) and Dun Airnestean (Lewis) also indicate prehistoric occupation and activity through either upstanding remains and artefactual evidence, or both (RCAHMS 1928). Dun Innisgal (NG08NW2) or 'Island of the Strangers' is one of the few island dwellings on Harris. The dun is located on an intertidal islet which revealed flint arrowheads and pottery within heavily robbed stone ruins (Thomas 1890: 397). Ordnance Survey inspectors in 1969 estimated the walling at 3m in thickness and 16m in diameter (RCAHMS 2010) and also noted pottery sherds amongst what was described as midden material. The OS report does not give any descriptions of the pottery therefore even a broad date remains elusive.

Information was passed on to Beveridge by an unidentified local (most likely his guide) who mentioned another 'island-fort in a large loch on the Portain Peninsula, 'high up near Crogary na Hoe' (1911: 149). The only immediately possible location is Loch na Cointich (NF97SE 5), a conclusion also reached by Beveridge (fig. 6.19). Loch na Cointich contains two islands, one of which is largely submerged. Either of these possible sites were not inspected underwater due to adverse weather on the day of the investigation. However, a walkover survey was made around the loch after the steep trek up from Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn. Neither one revealed signs of human activity yet the larger of the two was heavily vegetated and was certainly large enough (58x30m) to support extensive works. The loch sits in a saddle adjacent to the final ridge leading up to Crogarry, yet today it is hard to visualise anything other than rough grazing taking place here. It must be said that on a fine day excellent views across the Minch would be available. During the field visit in 2010, the Isle of Skye, some 26km away, was faintly visible under storm conditions and a small sailboat could still be seen several km out at sea. There are also two other possible alternatives identified from aerial photos at the southern end of the massif. The first is Loch Gille-ghoid, which contains a small island some 30m at the widest point. The second is a faintly visible submerged islet approximately 20m/dia. in Loch Scalan which overlooks the Minch in a prominent yet very remote location. While the local folklore cannot be easily discounted, the fact remains that island dwellings in Scotland are rare in high, remote areas. The disproved Corie an Lochan (below) is a prime example of this, yet it was located at a much

higher altitude (c.700m versus 90m). Loch na Cointich, while remote and steep, remains an important site for future investigation and should not be discounted.

The relationship of the four known sites to Crogarry is not easily reconciled in terms of 'function' or any element of contemporaneity, yet the model of island dwelling use during later prehistory points to an element of continuity which would entail a degree of chronological site overlap. Given that Hebridean sites are stone, they require minimal maintenance to remain habitable in comparison to mainland crannogs, whose exposed wooden elements require relatively frequent replacement (*cf* Buiston) and are prone to fire hazards. Therefore, it is quite likely that the 'Crogarry Group' was active at points during later prehistory with Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn acting as the central place of importance. Loch na Caginn appears to have acted as more of an agricultural/pastoral homestead given the large layout and easy access from shore via a wide causeway. This is the exact opposite of Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn which has narrow, difficult access, suggested by the broken pottery found alongside, which leads to a small yet elaborate structure of clear status.

The fact that only two of the Crogarry Group are located in lochs which form part of an interconnected waterway while two others have direct sea access points to a synergistic purpose beyond convenience and mobility, as Dun Mhic Laitheann stands in complete isolation yet is situated at the entrance to Cheese bay (Baigh a Chaise). The proximity of the Crogarry Group to the associated high ground contrasts with the numerous lochs immediately to the west. This area is completely void of any *currently known* island dwellings despite a number of small islets which have clear access to the sea. This is a pattern repeated throughout later prehistoric North Uist with very few exceptions (i.e. waterway/maritime sites). While intensive survey may well uncover new sites in this blank area to the west, the fact remains that later prehistoric island dwellings are quite conspicuous and any upstanding remains in this area would likely have been cursorily identified or noted through place-names, local tradition, antiquarian observations, casual walkers, or indeed aerial photography which can often detect submerged sites.

6.5.4 Example Two: Dun An Sticer (NF87NE1) and Loch Iosal an Duin (NF97NW6)

The area containing Dun an Sticer and Loch Iosal an Duin (figs. 6.20 & 6.21), east of the B893

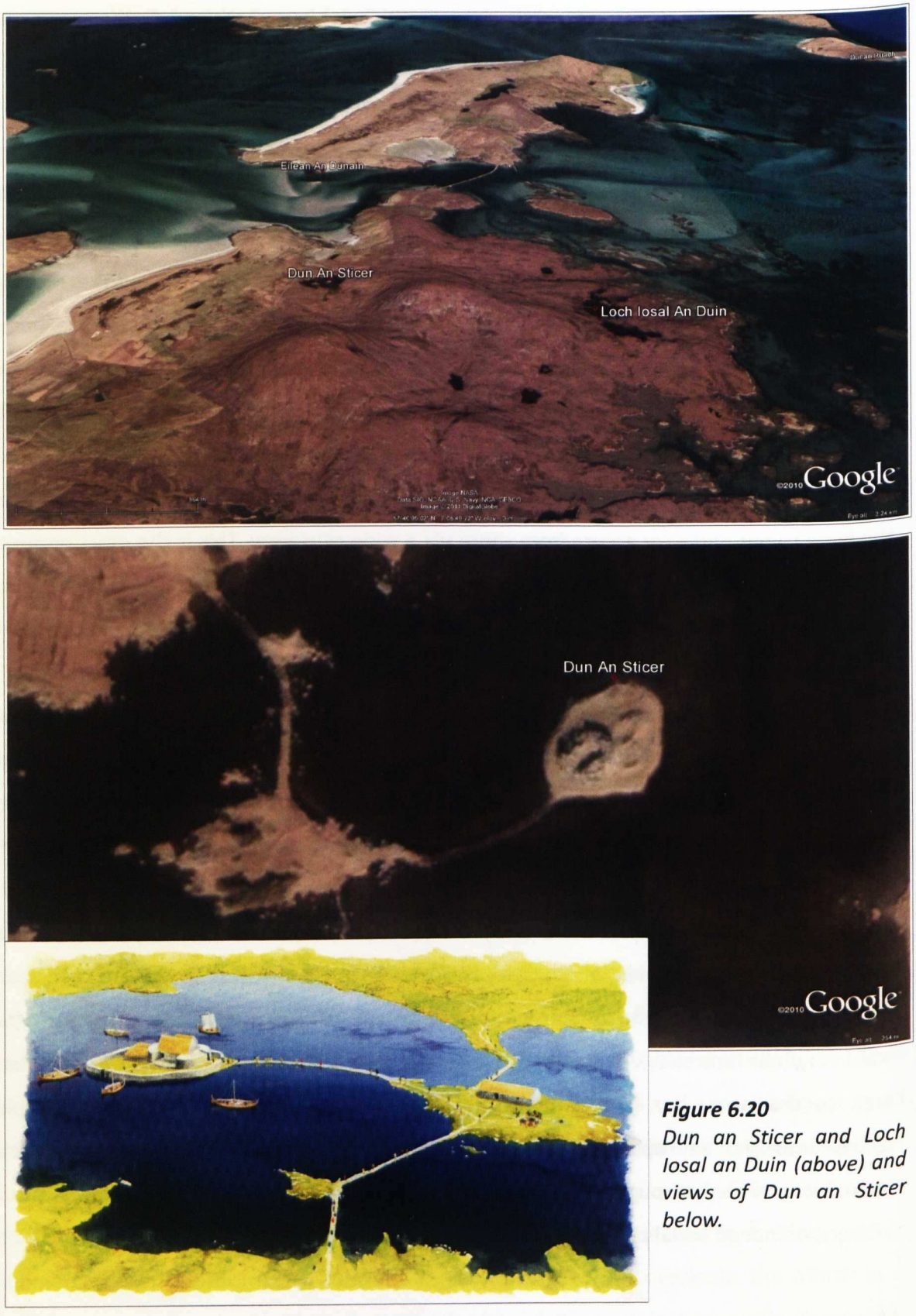


Figure 6.20
Dun an Sticer and Loch Iosal an Duin (above) and views of Dun an Sticer below.

Figure 6.21 *Loch Iosal an Duin (Beveridge c.1911, top) and in 2010, below. The Hebridean landscape has remained relatively untouched in many areas.*

to Berneray, is uninhabited today, yet contains good grazing areas. Most notably, extensive remains of relict *feannagan* or lazybeds exist, a type of cord rig farming particularly well suited to the peaty soils of the Hebrides that went out of use elsewhere in the Post-Medieval Period (fig. 6.9). This type of agriculture is similar to cord rig farming yet the ridge and furrow are considerably larger and therefore easier to detect on aerial photos (fig). This method of farming was widely used in the Hebrides until the clearances and provides. Dun an Sticer and Loch Iosal an Duin are discussed together as their relative isolation to other island dwellings and location near Berneray and the Sound of Harris emphasises agricultural activity, a strategic importance and direct access to seafaring activities. Immediately to the north, Berneray lies 500m across the shallow strait and serves as a stepping stone to mountainous Harris and expansive Lewis beyond. This north-eastern area of North Uist is unusual in that it contains a sparse quantity of archaeological sites, with Dun an Sticer the sole scheduled ancient monument and Loch Iosal an Duin the only other site listed in the SMR.

The better known of the two sites, Dun an Sticer, represents a broch shell that was re-used in the Late Medieval-Post Medieval Period, with a rectangular interior likely constructed from broch walling that was pulled down. Dun an Sticer was also briefly re-occupied around 1601AD (5.11, above) when a local attempting to usurp the head of the MacDonald Clan resided there until his capture and eventual demise at Duntulm Castle on Skye[4]. The elaborately constructed causeway is of a robust design capable of supporting a small wagon, and crosses the 'Island of Bad Council' or Eilean na Mi-Comhairle before reaching the broch. The breadth of the causeway would have been capable of supporting a small wagon. Dun an Sticer is located in a shallow loch whose outlet lies less than 100m from the bay at Port Nan Long and would have afforded the former occupants highly sheltered sea access. Modern roadworks built sometime after the mid-19th century to Berneray now cut across the outlet but the original significance of this location is still apparent. Beveridge reports finds of pottery by local curio-hunters, yet no date or description is available and the interior of this highly visible and easily accessible site was likely cleared out several times in antiquity. As this site is located on a natural island, underwater examination was of limited effectiveness in adding to the surprisingly scant understanding of what is perhaps the best-known island dwelling in the Outer Hebrides.

[4]This is the unfortunate Hugh, son of Archibald 'the Clerk' who was apparently betrayed by his mother as he tried to swim away from the islet; he was imprisoned in Duntulm Castle with only a leg of salted beef and without water. Despite a vain attempt to escape by prising the wall away with bones, according to local traditions, he died in agony of thirst as a warning to others who held similar designs.

In comparison, relatively little is known about Loch Iosal an Duin whose name means the 'Lake of the Lower Fort'. This is most likely a direct reference to Dun an Sticer as it is the only other known site in the area, yet it does not necessarily relate to contemporary occupation. While it cannot be said that the two sites have anything near identical chronologies, it stands to reason that it is quite probable that Loch an Iosal would have witnessed similar occupation spans during the later prehistory or the Early Historic Period. This is supported by the place-name reference to the 'lower fort' given that no other possible 'forts' have been found in the area. Structurally, the site consists of slightly visible walling amongst considerable overgrowth. The location on the opposite flank of Beinn Bhreac from Dun an Sticer provides a complimentary view towards Harris. Remains of stone tumble were only partially visible, but vegetation would need to be removed before details can be recorded.

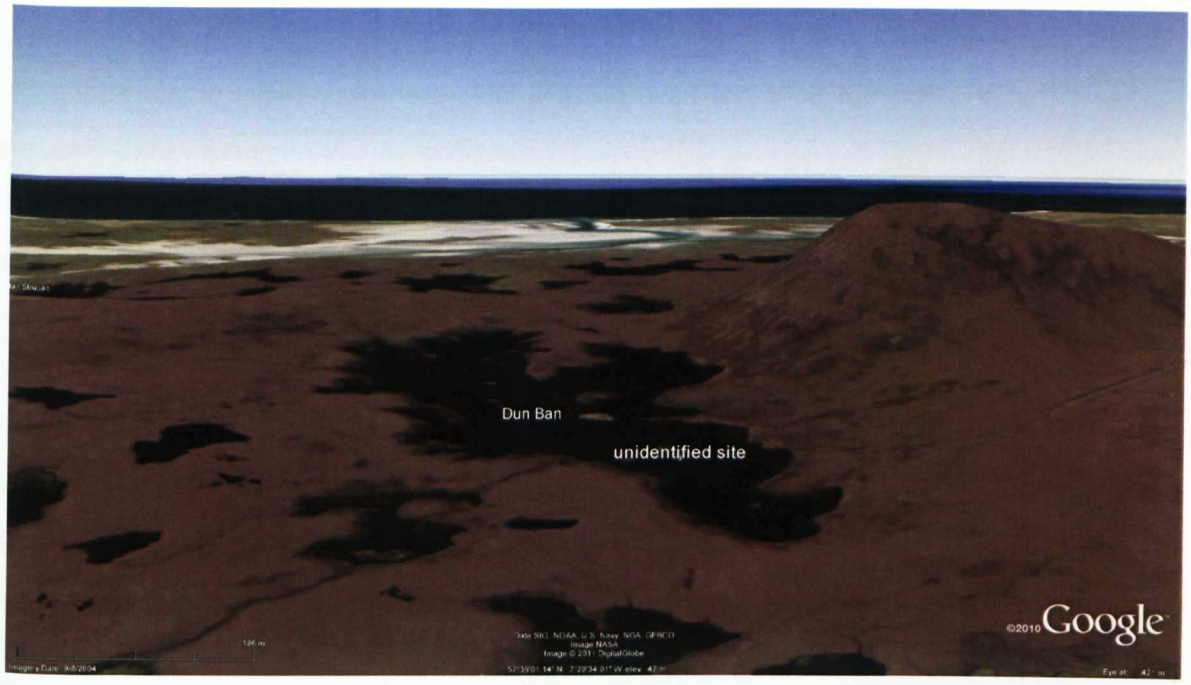
6.5.5 Unival and Dun Ban, Loch Huna

Another example in the SW area of North Uist is Unival (140m OD) which stands as a prominent feature with Dun Ban, Loch Huna (NF86NW3) located on the eastern flank with views towards the Atlantic Ocean and Saint Kilda, 78 km distant (fig 6.22). Dun Ban lies along the southern terminus of the 9km wide tract of land populated by lochs yet void of island dwellings (fig. 6.6). Based upon the cellular insertions noted by Thomas (1890: 402) the site appears to have later prehistoric origins underlying later Medieval reuse. The area around Unival stands out as there are numerous lochs but very few island dwellings. One possible unlisted islet appear some 160m north of Dun Ban, spotted on aerial photos which points to the probability that island settlements do exists yet have not been discovered. However, this segment of North Uist was by no means void of human activity. When examining the SMR, the historic landscape here is densely populated with numerous pre- and post-clearance stoneworks c.1266AD-, with 63 out of 100 sites listed either as clearance cairns, blackhouses, shielings, field enclosures or small settlements. These are heavily concentrated along the coastal A865 with the interior sites primarily prehistoric in nature with two chambered cairns Leacach An Tigh Chloiche (MWE 10234) and Uamh Airidh Nam Faoch (MWE10235: including souterrain) situated near Loch Huna. So the question remains why did the lochs in this area, seemingly ideal for island dwellings, remained sparsely settled in contrast to the rest of North Uist? Several influences appear to be at work which offer more attractive alternatives to islets. The development of the machair since the Neolithic has

been the main attraction for western coastal settlement throughout the Uists, while the hinterland was of limited agricultural value and isolated in regards to marine resources. The number of shielings versus the lack of long-term settlement in the hinterlands corroborates the notion that this area was primarily used for grazing at least since the 1st millennium AD, a land-use pattern which survives today. The only possible exception to this is a single Iron Age cellular insertion inside the chambered cairn (SMR-MWE 10234) at 80m OD on the south-western shoulder of Uineabhal (Unival), excavated by Lindsay Scott in 1935 and 1939 (Scott 1950:5). The interior produced later prehistoric pottery while food remains consisted of cockle and winkle shells, indicating a level of at least partial reliance upon maritime subsistence activities. Rather than a permanent habitation, this site likely acted again as a shieling or seasonal shelter which afforded sweeping views of the surrounding grazing areas and west coast. Therefore, given the option between settling the peaty, barren hinterland and rich machair, it is not surprising that later prehistoric inhabitants chose the latter. They could readily alternate subsistence activities between the abundant coastal resources and interior grazing areas, keeping rudimentary shielings for pastoral activities. As a result, this coastal alternative was more attractive than living on islands in the hinterland which were beyond the abundant shellfish grounds of Oitir Mhor, Oitir Fhiadhaich, Traigh Leathann and Traigh Eachcamais on the south-east coast of North Uist.

6.5.6 Discussion of spatial distributions

The 28 sites listed above in the 'ancestral/landmark' grouping include at least four 'complex' Atlantic roundhouses whose architecture represents the highly technical, skilled nature of later prehistoric construction in Atlantic Scotland: Dun an Sticer, Dun An t-Siamain, Dun Torcuill and Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn. The first three Atlantic Roundhouses can alternatively be classed as 'brochs' while Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn, although only 10m in diameter (6.3.2, above) is nevertheless constructed with great skill and craftsmanship, having almost perfect cylindrical proportions (Beveridge 1911: 133). The high build quality and monumental design attributes reflect the degree of status inherent in all CAR's while the underwater investigation returned numerous sherds of decorated pottery around Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn. The collective evidence strengthens the notion that this site was a well-established node in the surrounding landscape for centuries, known to all who lived on Portain. The name itself indicates a connection to royalty, albeit a misplaced one as early



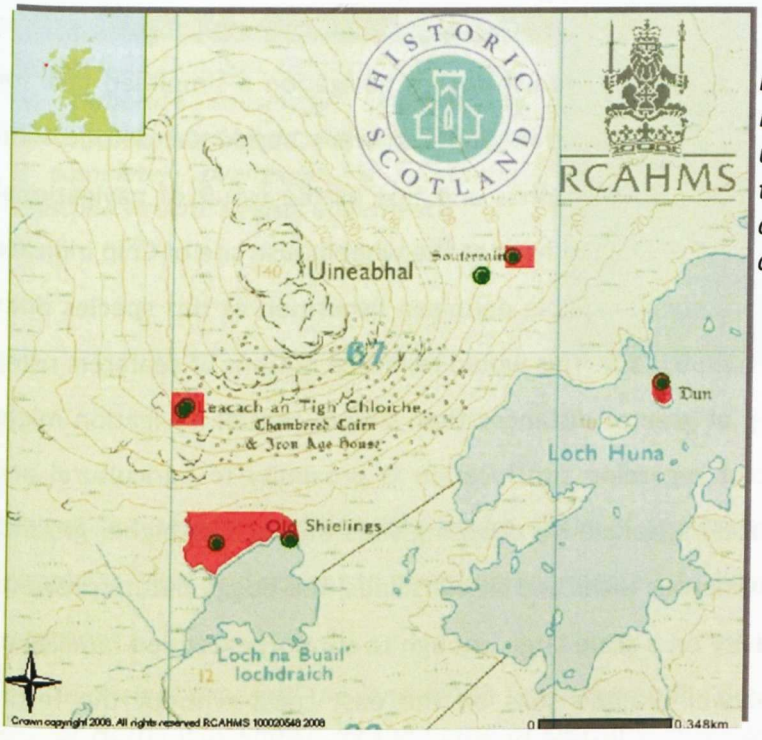


Figure 6.22 *Unival in relation to Dun Ban and unidentified/ uninspected site. A chambered tomb on the slopes of the hill attests to continued activity around the site (left).*

antiquarians believed that monumental architecture was a Norse construct. Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn was not perhaps a ruling centre, but more likely a thriving, well established residence of a forerunner to the Medieval laird or tacksman. The use of island dwellings for tacksmen, the intermediaries between ruling clansmen and land workers, is well established

during the Medieval Period in the Western Isles (1.7.2, above) and there is no reason to suggest that this concept does not have roots in later prehistory social organisation. Why later prehistoric island dwellings are often clustered near prominent landmarks raises several interpretative questions. Starting from a functionalist perspective, these hilltops would serve as nodal points to receive or send visual information, either to monitor movements or provide rapid inter-settlement communication. The reliable use of high ground as 'lookouts' may be readily called into question as the Hebridean weather often remains largely intact. From personal observations at Crogearraidh na Thobha (154m) near the suspected Loch na Cointich, small sea-going vessels can be readily identified approaching the coast even in very inclement weather. Alternatively, from a mariner's perspective, the coastline is largely featureless even for indigenous persons with an intimate knowledge of the islands. Prominent peaks would therefore serve as the first reference point for navigators to make critical decisions when relying upon sail or human power. Situating island dwellings near these points creates a strong reference point which makes navigation a simplified task for someone in a small craft at sea. Effectively, this would prevent accidental detours and extensive delays while fighting the prevailing winds and tide as the result of navigational errors. To the north on Lewis, extensive finds of hake at the wheelhouse site of Cnip indicate that later prehistoric peoples were highly capable deep-sea fishermen as this species does not inhabit coastal waters (Armit 1996: 150). This would reinforce notions of seafarers using landmarks when offshore fishing at greater distances than simple coastal navigation might require. Another influential factor regarding site location is proximity to agricultural and grazing lands - perhaps the greatest rationale for choosing sites that border higher ground. While the hinterland contains numerous lochs and small islands, the boggy nature prevents any widespread agricultural activity on a scale large enough to support extended families or clan groups. The availability of well-drained soils on the east coast without the fertile machair tend to be located near higher, better drained soils which are fundamental to productive agricultural practises. This presents additional evidence for making a case for island dwelling locations near high ground.

6.5.8 Dun Ban, Grimsay

Although physically separate from North Uist, the island of Grimsay off the SE coast of North Uist forms a boundary between the two areas and physically forms part of North Uist twice a

Figure 6.23 *Dun Ban, Grimsay with author on elaborate causeway. Findspots of pottery are noted (right).Although the site is completely overgrown, a substantial drystone structure exists underneath.*

day at low tide. In addition, the entire chain of southerly Hebridean islands were known simply as 'Uist' and appear to have been connected. As Captain Thomas remarked in the 19th century:

> *In ancient times all the land which lay between the Sound of Barra and the Sound of Harris was known by the name of Uist. It is quite possible that when the land received the name of Uist, it was but one island at all times of tide [while] Grimsay is one of those geographical portions for which the English language has no descriptive term; it is an island for six hours, and part of North Uist for the next six (1890: 399).*

Grimsay would have played an important role for the entire eastern seaboard of the Uists as a mid-point between Barra and Lewis. Consistent with that concept today, the small harbour of Kallin forms an integral crossroad for travel along the islands and home for a small but active fleet of fishing boats which have 24 hour access to the sheltered harbour, regardless

of tide while the nearby harbour of Bagh Mor now lies empty and local information suggests that it was likely in use during the Medieval Period, if not earlier (Ian MacDonald, pers. comm.). Several hundred metres north of the harbour is the narrow outlet of Loch Horneray, and Dun Ban (NF 8699 5695, RCAHMS no. 399). The loch itself is a brackish mix evidenced by the blur between different water densities and seaweed towards the outlet where the dun is situated. This loch had the highest underwater visibility, over 4 metres, and was also the deepest, as stones released next to the dun while underwater passed out of sight and were heard clattering for several seconds before reaching bottom on the NW side. However, the lochbed rises on the SE and supports an elaborate curving causeway topped with several stones up to an estimated 1500kg each[5], and stands some 2m proud off the floor. As Armit notes, the islet itself is natural, rising out of the loch by approximately 4 metres, and underwater inspection confirms this although a large quantity of loose stone is visible on the steep precipice surrounding the islet which measures approximately 25m on the E-W axis.

The island was heavily covered in brambles and was also very unstable when trying to access the interior (fig. 6.23). A small boat keel and several planks roughly 2m in length and heavily tarred were found on the north side of the causeway but appeared to be of late 19th or early 20th century date, possibly the small boat mentioned by Thomas used to access the site. Based upon the plan, by Thomas (1890), who hired workers to clear the interior during a brief visit, Armit has commented (1992: 34) that cells 'f' and 'h' appear as intra-mural broch features; when considered with the staircase 'I' this strongly indicate a broch yet the linear walling in 'e' hints at a secondary phase. This is quite possible given the events at Dun an Sticer, North Uist (NF 897 776) which saw the insertion of a rectilinear stone structure within the original roundhouse. The immediate issue with the 1890 plan is the layout which almost erases any usable floor space raising the question why the effort was made to dramatically reduce the interior. Although bedrock was reached, and therefore the primary occupation layer, removal of vegetation and tumble for a second examination would clarify this problem. The secondary re-use at Dun an Sticer saw a sizeable reduction in interior space yet also witnessed major removal of one side of the broch to accommodate the insertion of windows, so while counter-intuitive, great effort has been demonstrated in the 'remodelling' of brochs to suit the changing desire of incoming occupants. This material

[5] Several large slabs approximately 2m x 1m x 30cm were noted. At 2625kg per cubic metre for gneiss this equates to @1575kg, based upon Holley 2000, appendix 2.

Figure 6.24 *Pottery from Dun Ban, Grimsay. Finding vessels whose form remains intact is rare in Hebridean archaeology.*

Figure 6.25 *View of vessel from Dun Ban illustrating bevelled rim.*

most likely was reused from upper sections of the former broch and could simply be passed down and re-lain according to plan rather than freshly imported to the site. Given the strategic location of the site, Dun Ban likely would have served as a stronghold in the prehistoric and medieval landscape in a junction for travel on the eastern coast of the Uists.

6.6 Pottery

6.6.1 Pottery from Dun Ban, Grimsay

The 2010 season was especially productive for the recovery of later prehistoric pottery with three sites returning finds from the lochbed surrounding the site or along the causeway: Dun

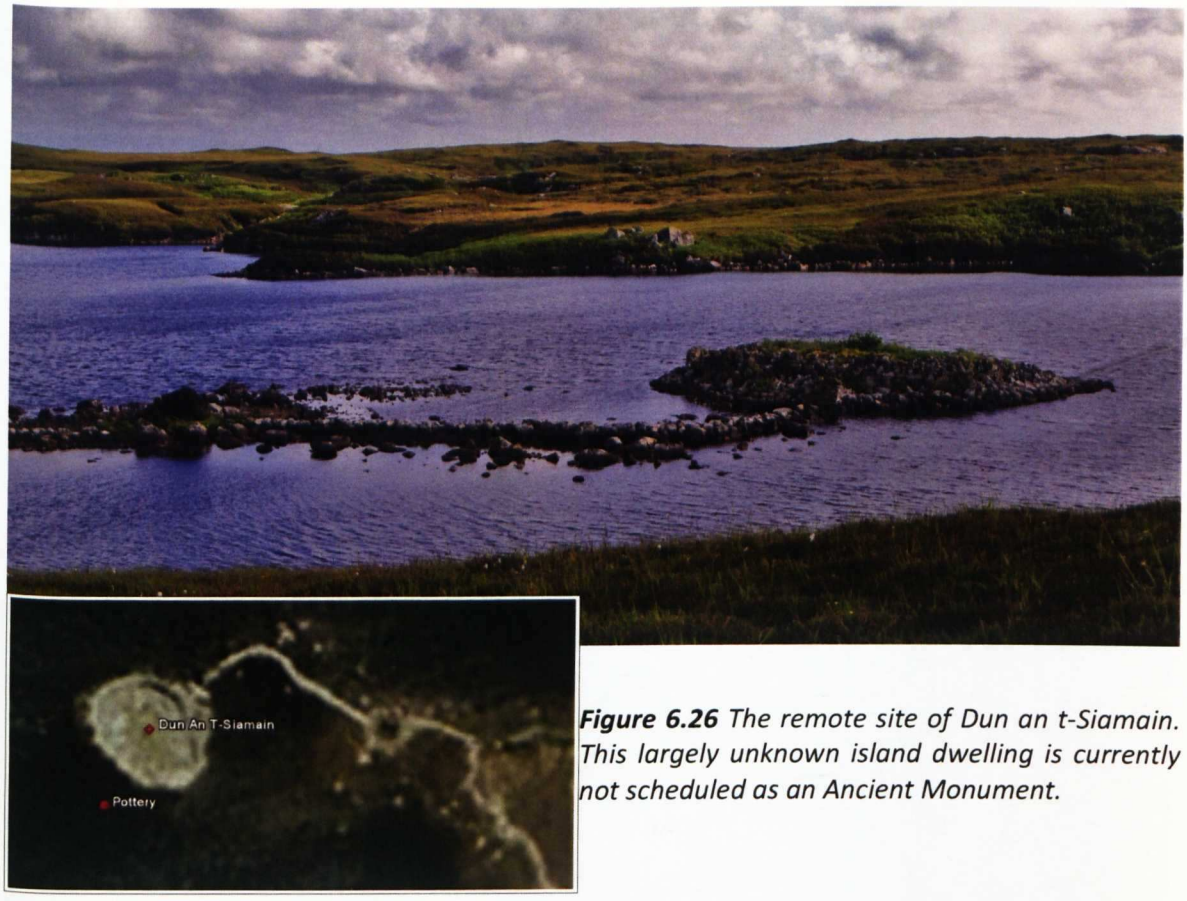


Figure 6.26 *The remote site of Dun an t-Siamain. This largely unknown island dwelling is currently not scheduled as an Ancient Monument.*

Nighean Righ Lochlainn (discussed above), Dun Ban, Grimsay and Dun an t-Siamain, at the base of Eabhal. Dun Ban, Grimsay is the only site here which does not show outward indications of an Atlantic Roundhouse, yet Thomas (1890) relates what appear to be cellular insertions within walling some 2-3m in thickness. Given the amount of foliage present, it was not possible to view the structural walling without involved removal. However, when inspecting the lochbed 2.5m from where the causeway meets the island, in c.4 metres of water, a large vessel was found lying on a small shelf on a slope of c. 55-60 degrees. The incline continued down for another 3-4m before reaching a silty bottom. Consensus places the vessel in the middle Iron Age, i.e. the last centuries BC or first centuries AD, due to the bevelled rim instead of the later everted design, although it must be stressed that our understanding of the Hebridean pottery sequence is still in its infancy (Lane 1990: 108). While the circularity of the vessel is intact, a large section is missing from the base. Nevertheless, much of the vessel is highly preserved, showing clear evidence of 'combing' to smooth the surface. The vessel measures 30cm/dia. and stand 28cm high and has a brushed surface texture (figs. 6.24 & 6.25). It does not appear to be grass-tempered which would place it just prior to, or within, the Norse Period (Armit 2009: 65). The relatively smooth

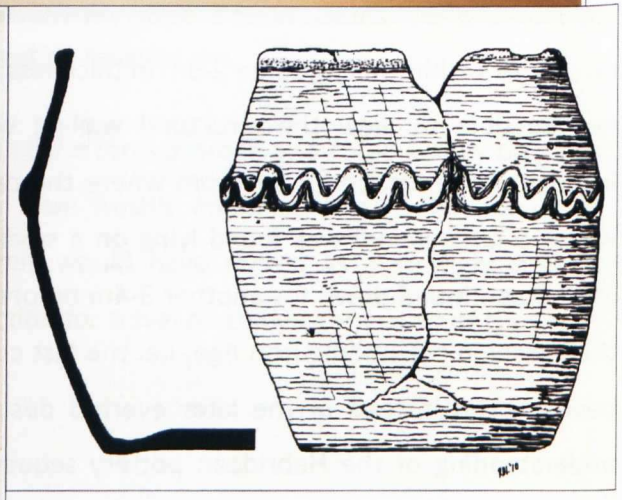


Figure 6.27 *Vessel from Dun an t-Siamain.*

Figure 6.28 *Larger vessel from Dun an t-Siamain (half intact) which was carefully photographed and returned to its location in the loch. The smaller vessel was found nested inside this shell. This indicates that the objects were not randomly thrown into the loch from the dun. Whether this was a 'ritual' or chance deposition remains unclear. Underwater investigation has the ability to refine ceramic vessel forms within Hebridean contexts.*

surface of the vessel and examination of the fabric on broken edges reveals a medium-fine slip with minor inclusions of probably gneiss temper. No organic material were noted nor were any applied lugs or facets that would suggest a handle of some description. The lack of decoration is somewhat unusual, as is the internally bevelled rim. Very few vessels from Hebridean contexts have been recovered in largely intact condition, and no direct parallels to this vessel have been found in archaeological reports during this research, particularly in regards to the exterior finish. Therefore it is quite possible the date for this vessel may shift considerably in the future.

A second large sherd of decorated pottery, measuring 17x16cm, was also found along the causeway. It is of a similar fabric yet has a completely smooth exterior with two applied 'lugs'

and represents and unusual and rare type of decoration; the only parallel was a small sherd from Dun Vulan which appears to have an applied lug (*cf* Parker-Pearson *et al.* 1999: 72). The curvature of the sherd from Dun Ban is quite pronounced and suggests a rather short, bulbous vessel with a slightly everted rim rather than the more typical interpretations of elongated, almost vase-like vessels from sites such as Dun Bharabhat.

6.6.2 The Pottery from Dun an t-Siamain or 'Fort of the Rope'

The remote site of Dun an t-Siamain, North Uist (fig. 6.26) also returned an almost complete (c.75%) later prehistoric vessel with wavy cordon applied to the shoulder of the vessel which initially indicates a horizon in the first half of the first millennium AD. This coil-made vessel was found 3m from the rear of the dun, opposite the causeway, in 2m of water. The cup was nested inside a broken vessel of larger dimension, also with applied wavy cordon, which raises questions as to whether the vessels were placed in the loch rather than carelessly thrown or dropped. Around the vessels, three large stones created a protective niche; however there is no indication that these stones were intentionally placed. The alternate possibility remains that a logboat (unlikely) or a hide boat overturned, leaving the cargo nested together. The larger of the two vessels, representing an almost perfect half-section, was lifted, photographed and carefully returned in situ for fear of damage on the 3 hour return walk to the vehicle. Both the design and decoration on both vessels are well-known in Hebridean contexts (figs. 6.27 & 6.28) yet the excellent preservation of the bottom is unusual, as is the survival of the overall form. The wavy cordon perhaps represents the most common form of decoration; sherds with this decoration have been found at Dun Bharabhat, Berigh, Dun Vulan, Sollas, the Udal, Vallay, Rudh a' Duin and Eilean Maelit.

6.6.3 The Pottery from Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn

Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn on the Portain Peninsula, North Uist returned two sherds of decorated pottery when investigated underwater, along with several other smaller undecorated body sherds. The first diagnostic sherd, measuring 8x8cm, was recovered 3m from the base of the islet on the lochbed, opposite the causeway in 1.5m of water. The sherd represents a partial rim with 'rope' cordon on the shoulder of the vessel. Between the rim and the shoulder, geometric incisions of the 'stab and drag' nature are clearly etched into the surface (fig. 6.29). The colour of this sherd is a dark reddish-brown, and although having

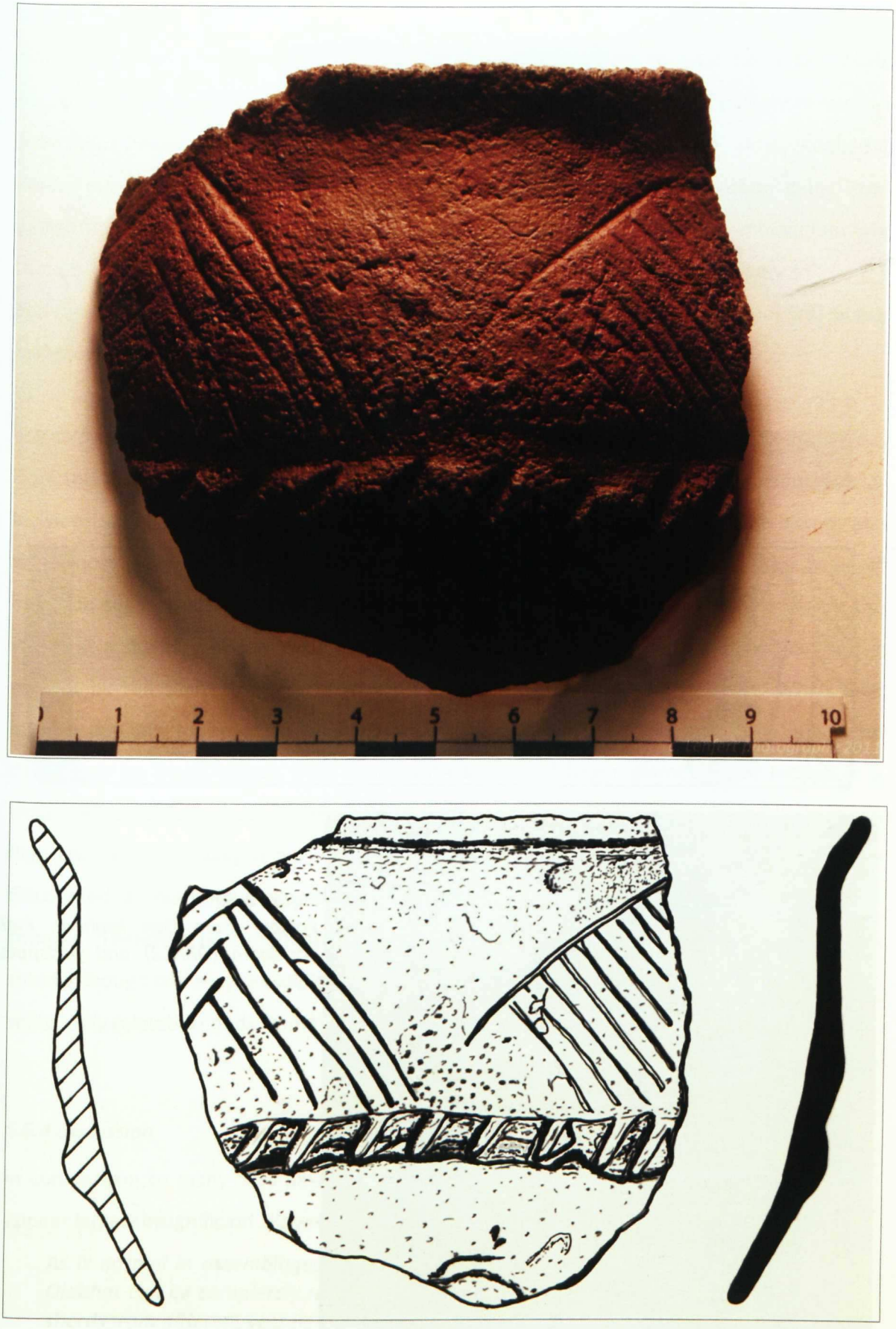
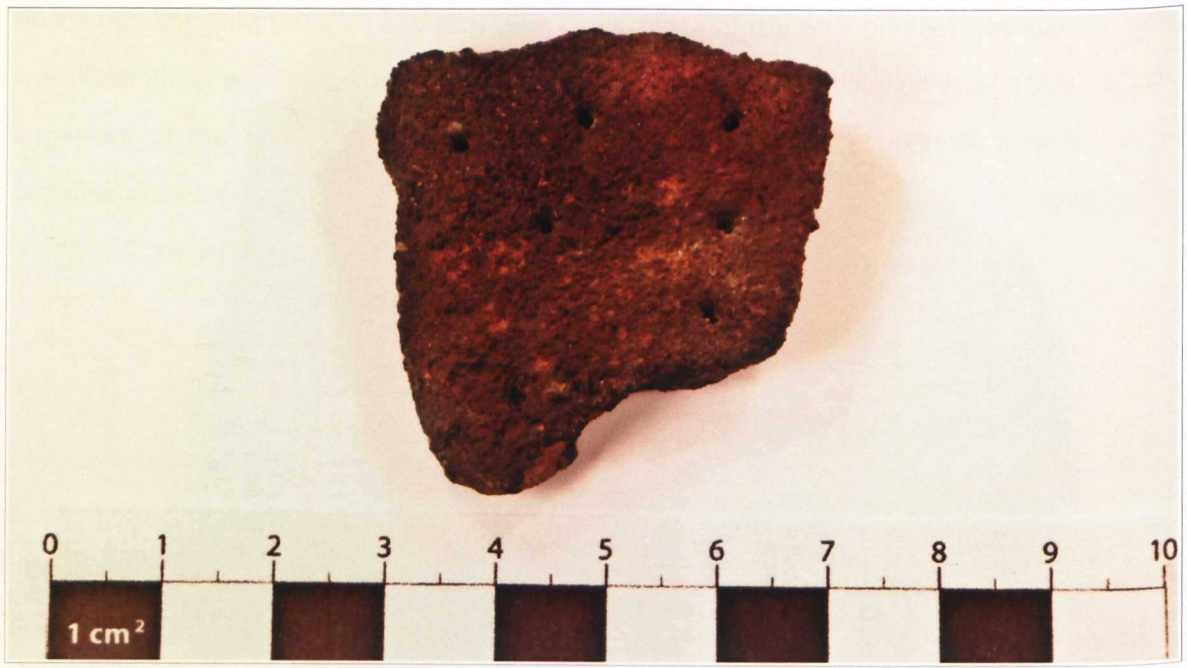


Figure 6.29 *Pottery from Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn (DRNL1).*



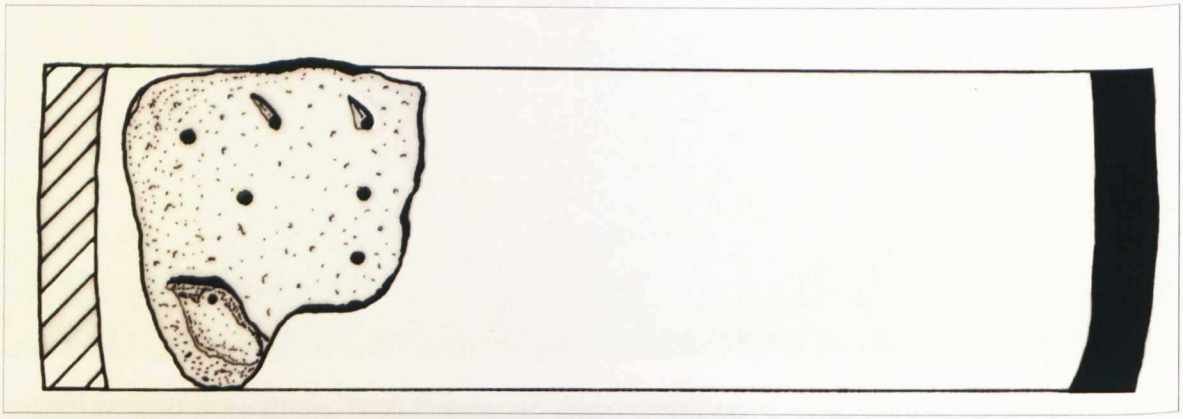


Figure 6.30
Pottery from Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn (DRNL2) and findspots, left.

a smooth finish, inclusions of gneiss are visible both in the fabric cross-section and protruding from the exterior. The firing of the vessel appears to have been at a high, consistent temperature which produced a harder finish than the other pottery recovered from the fieldwork. The decoration has parallels from Berigh, the Udal, Kilphedar wheelhouse (NF72SW1) Eilean Maelit and Dun Mor Vaul, Tiree. Radiocarbon dates from Berigh in particular suggest that this pottery does not predate the first millennium AD, though it could range as late as the 5th or 6th century. This would also broadly follow the appearance of internally partitioned structures such as Kilpheder (i.e. wheelhouses) in the early to mid-first millennium AD.

The second sherd, measuring 4x4cm (fig. 6.30) was located adjacent to the causeway 10m from the roundhouse and 20m from the shoreline. It has small, closely spaced deep circular incisions which almost perforate the body (fig). They are approximately 2mm across and were most likely created with a very small bone awl perhaps from a bird. The angle of insertion suggests that the creator was looking down at the vessel as the holes enter the vessel at a slightly oblique angle rather than directly perpendicular to the surface. This is evident by the slight drag marks which are faintly visible near the incisions. While their initially appears to be close parallels with pottery from the Udal and Dun Vulan, the decoration on these vessels were made with an awl of larger diameter and incised in a shallower, linear fashion, not in the 'grid-like' sequence seen on the sherd from Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn. Initially it was suspected to be Norse platter-ware but this was quickly discounted as platter-ware is flat and has much larger 'dimpling' (Niall Sharples, pers. comm.). Therefore no confident date, other than later prehistoric, can be assigned to this sherd although one may reasonably suggest the early first-millennium AD if considered to be stylistically related to finds from the Udal or Dun Vulan.

6.6.4 Discussion

In comparison to many land-based excavations, the examples of pottery listed above may appear largely insignificant. However, as Armit states in regards to his experience:

> *As is normal in assemblages of Hebridean pottery, few vessel forms from Eilean Olabhat can be completely reconstructed, due to the basic similarities of the body sherds from different vessels (2009: 67).*

It is apparent from existing drawings that much is left to be desired in regards to the

complete vessel form as well. Drawings from terrestrial excavations typically rely upon small sherds, often under 5cm in size, which do not represent enough to confidently represent finished forms (Armit 2009: 69,71-72; Parker-Pearson *et al.* 1999: 72, 74-81, 112-121, 152-157, 184; Harding and Dixon 2000: 39,41; Harding 2004: 134-135, 269). Therefore the largely intact vessels from Dun Ban and Dun an t-Siamain represent a significant step in providing hard evidence for finished forms. In particular the unique vessel from Dun Ban does not match any of the reconstructions from Berigh or Dun Bharabhat, being largely globular with evidence for a more rounded bottom rather than a flat base (*contra* Harding 2004: 134-135). Chronology is another area that has much room for improvement. I would suggest that although several decorative themes such as wavy cordon do have a long chronological currency, Hebridean pottery still has tremendous potential to provide a chronological context (*contra* Armit 2009: 70). Yet very few examples of Hebridean pottery are derived from well-dated contexts which leaves the situation ample room for improvement. It can be argued that unstratified finds from a lochbed surrounding occupied islets are of little chronological value. However, no Medieval pottery or even modern debris was discovered lying on the lochbed around these sites, indicating that the pottery represents at least a single phase of use, especially when found in areas close to the islet were no causeway exists. Additionally, the lochs are often remote and see very few visitors while this remoteness also precludes even intrepid visitors from bringing any form of boat. Therefore the pottery would likely have been discarded from the islet *prior* to rubble occupying the interior. At Dun an t-Siamain both vessels are larger than the airspace between the tumble, and simply would not have survived in their present condition had they been removed after abandonment. At Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn, also unexcavated, rubble fills the interior to a depth of at least one meter preventing anyone from casually digging and moving cultural material – and also likely pulverising and pottery below. While Dun Ban was excavated, Thomas remarked that 'no relics of importance were found in this dun' (1890:401). The notion that one of the excavators threw a large, almost complete vessel into the loch (or anyone besides the occupants for that matter) is simply not probable. Therefore the vessels can only realistically represent use concurrent with, or prior to, occupation of the site given that they do not represent any ceramics later than perhaps the 7th century AD at maximum. This notion fits broad chronological frameworks for the islets based upon the circular Atlantic roundhouses on all three, yet these ceramic finds represent the first typologically datable material to emerge from any of the sites.

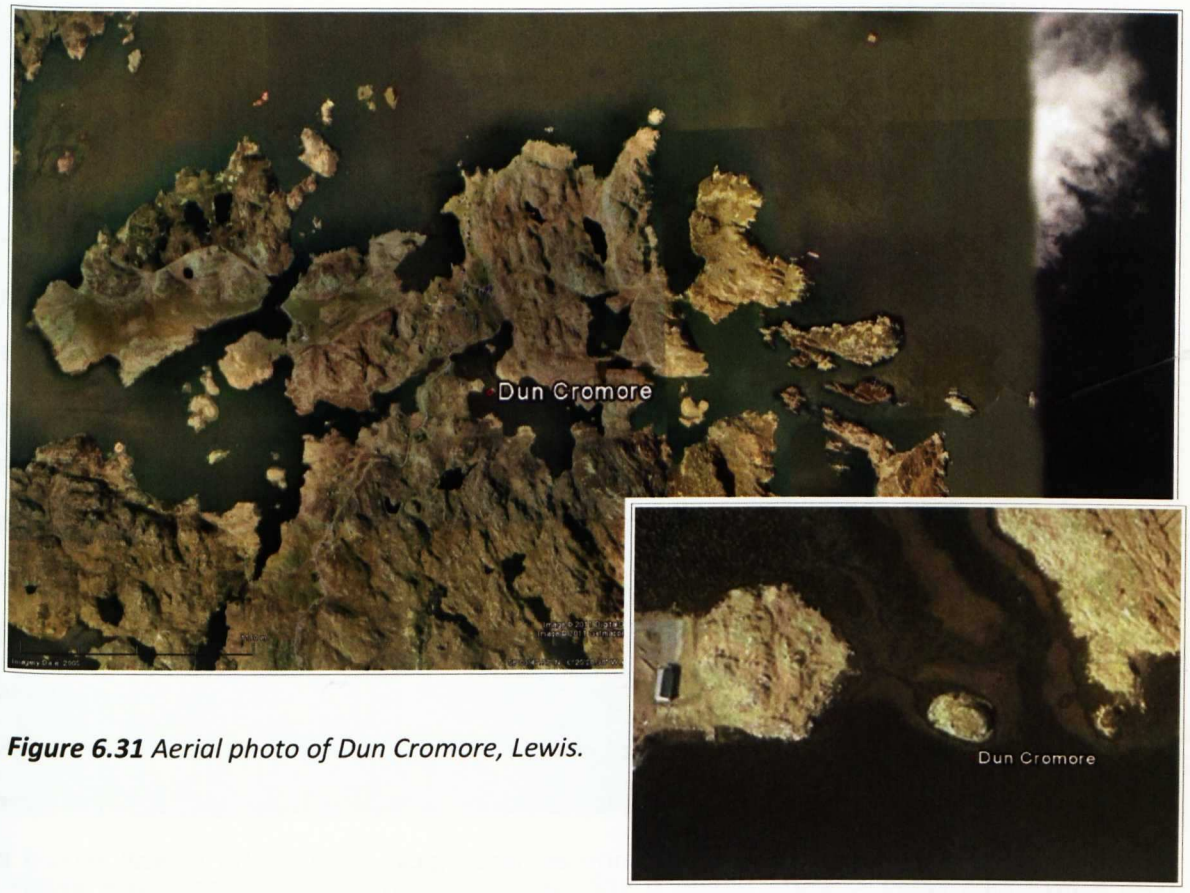


Figure 6.31 *Aerial photo of Dun Cromore, Lewis.*

6.7 Sites examined beyond the Uists

6.7.1 Dun Cromore, Lewis

This 'oval galleried dun' (Feachem 1963: 182) sits on a largely natural, circular islet some 25m across at the widest point, the causeway only survives below the water surface as a broken row of scattered stone (fig. 6.31). The structure itself is slightly oblong, measuring 15m externally with walling up to 3m in thickness. The galleries and staircase related to Feachem have long since been removed or obscured with tumble. No excavation has taken place but Thomas drew detailed plans of it during his visit (1890: 380). Underwater circuits around the base proved to be of little help in discerning any features or artefactual evidence. Perhaps due to the brackish nature of the loch, algal growth covering the bottom existed in proportions not seen in any other loch despite the overall good water visibility. A return visit in winter months would allow much better examination of the loch bed although vast quantities of stone tumble extending into the margins of the loch were visible.

6.7.2 Corie an Lochan, Highland (mainland - confirmed as a natural feature)

Examined on 12-06-2010, the suspected crannog Corie an Lochan or 'Little Lake in the Cauldron' (NH01 SW2) was found to be an unoccupied natural outcrop some 2m across at the water level located in a small loch at 668m above sea level (fig. 6.33) Located some 5-6km above the A87 in very mountainous terrain 12km from the Shiel Bridge, Corie an Lochan was reported by a hillwalker but was never archaeologically investigated, no doubt due to its difficult location. The best part of a day was spent climbing to the site and back with dive gear. The site does have a circular area of vegetation around it pointing to a possible submerged feature when viewed from the ridge above. The underwater component was investigated and was found to be completely natural with a lack of any evidence for any human activity. While a negative result was obtained for this site, it was nevertheless important to examine this natural feature as the high altitude and unusual location would have made for an entirely unique type of occupied islet. Island dwellings on the whole are unusually absent from this part of highland Scotland making Loch Garry (c.21km SE) the nearest site. By exposing this site as a non-archaeological feature, the overall record is thereby enhanced and more representative of a true distribution. This stands as the aim of inspecting unconfirmed sites regardless of outcome.

6.7.3 Loch Hope, Sutherland

Loch Hope lies in the far north west of the Scottish mainland (fig. 6.32). There are oral traditions of two submerged crannogs (NC45NE22 & NC45SE2) in this long, narrow loch which measures 9.66km north-south. although no archaeological interest has previously been shown in the sites. Therefore little confidence, or 'hope' was placed in finding either one as the OS reference was vague, covering an underwater area of at least 2,000m^2. When visiting the loch on 4-07-2010 a decision was made not to look for the site based on the existing records. To underscore the importance of speaking with local inhabitants, a local crofter who was passing by informed me that he knew exactly where the northern one was located and pointed out the general area to me. The crofter also remarked that in his youth he swam out to the islet during a period when the loch-level was exceedingly low. I was able to then easily locate the site after a lengthy swim of 115m from the eastern shore. The site is aligned with the margins of a drystone dike (fig. 6.32 inset) which contained the only areas of good grazing and level ground in the vicinity – a very similar situation to Morrison's

Figure 6.32 *Location of Loch Hope 'crannog'. Site is faintly visible in aerial photo while inset photo, bottom right, shows dam or crossing that has maintained water level in this large Highland loch.*

observations on locations in the landscape (1985: 65).

The mound itself is 30m in diameter, completely artificial, comprising relatively small sub-angular stones <40cm. No causeway was visible, and none appears to have been used as the loch bed is composed of fine yellow sand and is completely smooth and void of stones. The mound itself is well delineated and neatly arranged, without scattered stone randomly distributed around the site. No trace of any discernible structure atop the mound was noted which suggests the site is more akin to mainland crannogs further south than any Hebridean counterparts. The small nature of the stones which comprise the mound further suggest that it could not support the weight of drystone architecture, regardless of robustness. No piles were noted although any timber protruding from the mound would have been conspicuous unless erosion has hidden them within the mound – possibly a similar situation to Oakbank (Dixon 2004) which was initially visible as a sterile capping of stone overlying timbers. The top portion of the mound was 1.5m below the loch level at the time of visit and there were no indications that this was an unusually high condition. Therefore either considerable

Figure 6.33 *Author standing on discounted site of Corrie an Lochan.*

subsidence or loch level fluctuation has occurred since the mound was constructed, although the latter is favoured here. It appears the loch level can easily be altered at its steep northern outflow which leads directly into the sea. A partially breached dam, or more probably a crossing, is visible in aerial photos which closely follows the modern roadway (fig. 6.32 inset). As the loch outlet, the loch itself and its southern inlet extend directly south from the sea for 17km, there is no other place to cross for an appreciable distance. Undoubtedly this crossing would have been a major nodal point in the landscape for many centuries. Therefore the crannog appears to pre-date the construction of the old crossing, and may well be of prehistoric origin. In regards to the second crannog in Loch Hope, the crofter I spoke with was unaware of it. Based upon the location of the known site next to good areas for both grazing and settlement, it would be logical to look for the second crannog in a similar setting, of which only two others exist along the loch, greatly reducing the search area.

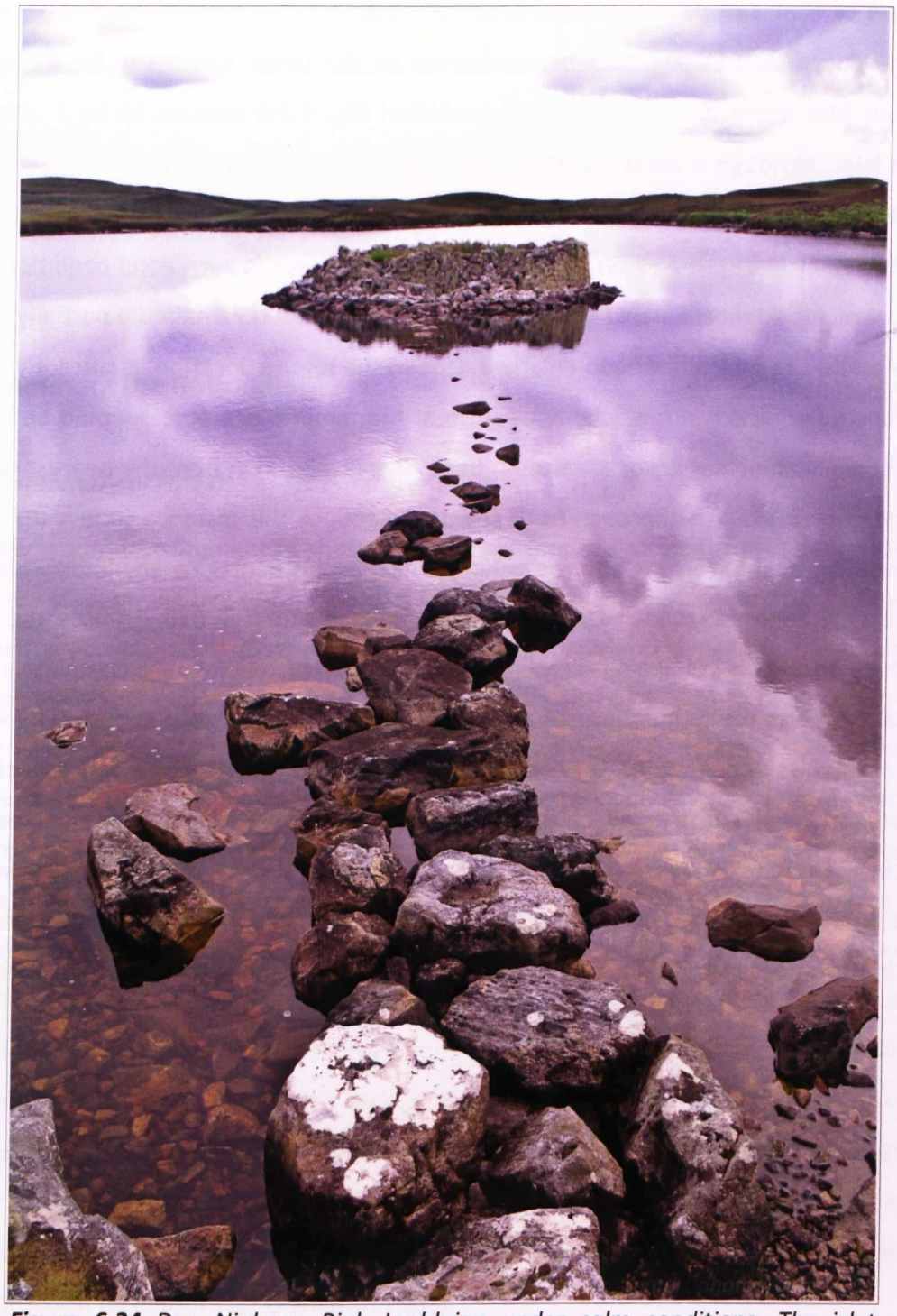


Figure 6.34 *Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn under calm conditions. The islet appears to be completely artificial.*

6.8 Notes on fieldwork

As this chapter has indicated, productive archaeological work underwater is possible on a limited budget in the Western Isles. Although the landscape can be difficult to negotiate, access to small watercraft in the future would open up accessibility for more remote sites by reducing time spent travelling to and from the site while allowing for a more sustained

inspection of islet and easier transportation of field and dive equipment. The three sites which produced pottery are also representative of the range which can be expected in Hebridean islet forms. Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn (fig. 6.34) appears to be a completely artificial islet, although a central portion may make use of a natural reef. The surrounding lochbed, however, did not suggest this. The fact that it contains an Atlantic roundhouse is also notable, in that examples on artificial islets rarely survive in such good condition due to the threat of subsidence. Further south on North Uist, Dun an t-Siamain is a partially artificial islet; a natural site which has been enlarged. Due to the remote location, it currently remains largely unstudied and is not a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Sea access would be required to mount a sustained survey or excavation here, as it is over 3km from the nearest road and surrounded by inlets. An approach from sea would reduce this distance to less than 250m, while avoiding a long walk back to the vehicle which avoids damaging any finds – hence the reason the decision was made to leave the larger finds *in situ*. Dun Ban, Grimsay, the last site to produce pottery, is yet again representative of a different typology – a completely natural islet that supports the foundations of a possible Complex Atlantic roundhouse. The energies of the occupants appear to have been able to focus upon the structure and especially the elaborate and well-constructed causeway, rather than having to focus upon creating an island. In all three examples, it is evident that the opportunistic use of natural islets was not a drawback and the degree of artificiality was secondary. Their locations next to prominent points in the landscape or near sheltered coastal locations appears to be more important.

Chapter 7

Conclusions: Taking in the View

7.1 Examining the Rationale

7.1.1 A summary of islet use in Scotland

It has been demonstrated in this thesis that the concept of 'living on water' saw widespread popularity through the use of both natural and artificial islets in Scotland over five millennia. However, superficial terminologies such as 'crannog' or 'island dun' have created a divide between mainland and Hebridean sites, which this thesis has begun to reconcile through a holistic discussion of both areas under a united concept. Chapters 2 has shown that traditional frameworks and categorisations can be counter-productive when examining what is effectively a single concept, i.e. living on small islets, as information gained from one 'type' such as island duns, can be applied to mainland timber sites. While mainland crannog studies struggle to determine how timber houses on islets were situated, or even basic dimensions, their Hebridean relations often contain well-preserved upstanding stone remains and foundations which allow useful contributions to mainland interpretations regarding islet function and layout such as at Cult's Loch. If seeking a 'true' meaning, the term *crannog* will continue to remain problematic as the original Gaelic application in regards to islet use is forever lost and at any rate terms such as *inis, isle, eilean* or *inch* saw more frequent use in the Medieval records; the commentators were not the least concerned with islet artificiality or construction techniques (cf O'Sullivan 2009).

Neolithic islet use in Scotland is currently an anomaly restricted to North Uist and Lewis in the Western Isles – this may remain so given the complete lack of any parallels on the mainland although critically, natural islets on the mainland have not been a focus of excavation. In the rare instances when they have been excavated, the results can be surprising – Melldalloch Island currently has the only convincingly Bronze Age date for islet use in Scotland (Rennie & Newall 2001: 3). Given the early debut for islet use in the Western

Isles, it is highly probable that more Neolithic islet sites will surface here. Equally, the complete absence of any Early or Middle Bronze Age occupied islets suggests a contentment with less ostentatious settlement forms on land such as simple roundhouses, and a continued focus upon the maintenance of elaborate uninhabited monuments such as chambered tombs instead – a model which has now survived unscathed for over two decades (Armit 1990c: 84; Armit 1992: 1; Fredengren 2002: 283; Henderson 2007: 150). Therefore the initial Neolithic use of islets can be considered a by-product which perhaps reflects the watery nature of the Western Isles, rather than an actual beginning which reflects trends across western Scotland. However, by the Early Iron Age, islet use undoubtedly extends over not only the Western Isles, but much of the mainland with high concentrations in the south-west, Argyll, the Great Glen and large interior highland lochs such as Loch Tay, Loch Awe and Loch Lomond (*see* Appendix Two). Although this fundamental understanding remains intact, field investigation detailed in Chapter 6 indicates that this will continue to expand to areas which are often overlooked, such as the Loch Hope site (6.7.3). The far north of Scotland, such as Sutherland and Caithness, currently contains 38 islet sites; this area is the most under-represented region in mainland Scottish islet studies largely due to the sparse modern population, lack of development and paucity of intensive survey. This is exemplified by the 'rediscovery' of the Loch Hope site during the 2010 field season which was located after a conversation with a local crofter. It can be safely assumed that many islet sites remain to be discovered here, although it is doubtful that northern Highland densities will approach anything like that seen in Argyll or Dumfries and Galloway. The presence of seven occupied islets in Orkney and most notably, two as far north as Shetland (Castle Holm & Loch of Brindister fig. 7.1: *see also* Appendix One) illustrates that the distributions for this type of habitation have expanded far beyond what Robert Munro might have imagined over a century ago.

While an 'islet hiatus' is currently seen to occur during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, and to a much lesser extent the Norse Period, the fact remains that small islet use is archaeologically visible in Scotland during four out of the past five and a half millennia. It of course remains possible that islet occupation during these periods of 'hiatus' will be discovered as well. It was recently noted by Cavers that the overall distribution appears to have also spread to more easterly areas of Scotland during the Medieval and Post-Medieval Periods as a united Scotland saw an acceptance of traditions which were perhaps formerly

Figure 7.1 *The Loch of Brindister: an artificial island in Shetland (photo: Simon Clarke/ UHI).*

restricted to westerly areas (Cavers 2010: 65). Yet critically, the strong evidence for a possible Bronze Age crannog at Duddingston Loch, along with several known Early Iron Age intertidal sites such as Redcastle and Phopachy in the Beauly Firth, indicate that the notion of a Medieval expansion of islet use into the east is perhaps overstated. In addition, many easterly Medieval islet sites may overlie evidence of prehistoric use – a common occurrence given the frequent re-use of islets seen in this thesis. However, the realisation that completely artificial islets were still being constructed in the 16th century AD in the *west* of Scotland, namely Eadarloch (Crone 2011: 36), alongside existing historical references to the artificial islet built in Loch Lochy around 1580AD (Morrison 1985: 23-24), further indicates that exceptions abound when attempting to generalise Scottish island dwellings – Eadarloch may also prove to be the only artificial island with a single phase of occupation; it is notable that these two 'late crannogs' are only 18km apart.

As living on islands had largely passed out of vogue by the Post-Medieval Period, many continued to remain in use for recreational purposes, hunting and fishing, storage, imprisonment or illicit activities such as alcohol production (Morrison 1985: 22). The final chapter of active island dwelling use in the 17th and 18th centuries saw crannogs as boltholes

of resistance to increasingly centralised powers who, in turn, saw them as a symbol of rebellion and often sought their destruction or subjugation (Dixon 2004: 39). Ultimately the use of island dwellings in Scotland remained alive perhaps until as late as the mid-19th century (Shelley 2009: 195). The tradition weathered broad environmental, political and social changes for millennia, only to be quietly phased out by increasing imperialism and the centralisation of power during the Post-Medieval Period. By the time of the 1715 rising, the use of small islets in Scotland all but disappears from the historical and archaeological record. This disappearance further reflects rapidly changing fashions in larger domestic architecture, a reduction in small scale violence, and changing social identities in the 17th and 18th centuries (Shelley 2009: 204). Therefore the age-old habit of living on small islets appears to have been quickly forgotten until antiquarians 'rediscovered' crannogs, perhaps in some instances less than one to two centuries after abandonment. The completely artificial nature of crannogs discovered during early drainage schemes no doubt was instrumental in their recognition as unusual places in the ancient landscape made by the hand of man.

This desire to intentionally inhabit 'difficult' places in the Scottish landscape, namely lochs, perhaps speaks more about the overall mentality and world-view of the occupants than the artefactual evidence can relate. At the same time, the ubiquity of islet settlement in Scotland, beyond that of typical models which project a 'western' distribution, points to a rationale that transcends use restricted to localised cultural groups. Yet the use of islets, especially artificial ones, falls off dramatically south of the Forth-Clyde isthmus despite the availability of suitable locations – a clear indication of visible cultural differences. If, or perhaps when, people return to re-inhabit or construct small islets in Scotland, this legacy would continue on as a reinvented tradition with ever-changing meanings; effectively a new chapter in one of the longest settlement narratives in Western Civilisation. It can be said statistically, given the persistent use of small islets in Scotland during four out of the past five millennia, it is conceivable that people may return to the lochs in future narratives, although the meanings will have changed once again, and the rationale perhaps more one of individualism than practicality (*see* fig. 2.5, p. 70). From a modern perspective, the way of life lived out on small islets vanished centuries ago; archaeologists cannot relive or recreate the mentality of past societies (*e.g.* those in prehistoric Scotland) with absolute sincerity. However, it is of course possible to make informed suppositions about the mind-set and motivations of island dwellers by drawing upon the fundamental observations and

circumstantial evidence presented in this research. Foremost, given the frequency of use, it is apparent that the motivation to live on an islet outweighs the inherent disadvantages, particularly for those who build artificial islets. Pragmatically these aspects manifest themselves as a set of 'physical hurdles' for island dwellers which are apparent in the archaeological record. These disadvantages include flooding and subsidence seen at sites such as Dun Bharabhat and Eilean Domhnuill, difficulty of access without watercraft (most sites), laborious construction regimes for artificial islets, high maintenance for timber and brushwood crannogs, and a limited, finite physical space for expansion (all sites). These factors contrast sharply with the relative simplicity of living on land, regardless of design or location. However this view has the potential to unfairly create a modern image of undue hardships, whether describing Iron Age or Post-Medieval use.

The ever-evolving function and meaning of small islet use over the millennia has created a unique standard by which to gauge long-term change in praxis and social structures (Gerritsen 1994: 11). Occupied islets have taken on a dramatic range of guises from simple homesteads to boltholes of resistance, chapels, monastic communities, council venues, neutral places, leper colonies and pottery, leather or metalworking sites. The range of monument classes found on islets and discussed in Chapter 2 reflect this notion, including brochs, duns, chapels, priories, abbeys, barmkins, castles, forges, walled islets and simply 'houses'. This broad range supports this concept of diversity in function and meaning. As a result, prominent islet locations also supported an ever-changing range of the latest in fashionable architecture, ranging from substantial timber roundhouses to robust stone duns, to later castles and religious centres. Yet even the 'lowliest' islet homestead, regardless of chronology, held an inherent degree of status. The very fact that they were sites surrounded by water, and therefore atypical, made them special and emphatically *exclusive*, to their land-based brethren.

In addition, Chapter 4 in particular has indicated that occupied islets are often ideally situated for long-distance transport and communication along major highland lochs, near coastal settings or along inland waterways such as the Great Glen (*see* fig. 7.4). Therefore, the apparent mobility of island dwellers appears to have played a key role in their frequent choice of location along arterial routes or within major bodies of water. In conjunction with the discoveries of logboats from numerous sites, often after antiquarian drainage schemes,

this suggests that watercraft represented more than simply a way to access islets. Chapter 3 has shown that the south west in particular demonstrates strong links between islet and watercraft use. Merely in the south-west of Scotland, Dowalton Loch, Loch Urr, Buiston, Black Loch, Barhapple Loch, Craigie Mains, Lochlea, Lochmaben, Milton Loch and Loch Arthur (Mowat 1996) have all revealed the presence of both crannogs and logboats, while more tenuous historical accounts such as the *OSA* have indicated the presence of crannogs in lochs with numerous logboat finds such as Castle Semple Loch. Unfortunately, the nature of antiquarian discoveries and a lack of conservation techniques often meant the destruction of logboats, hampering a solid chronological link between island dwellings and watercraft. However, strong circumstantial evidence such as an apparent lack of causeways on many sites, or a lengthy distance from shore underscores the necessity (and proficiency) of watercraft use by island dwellers.

7.2 'Island Dwellers': Identity and Status

7.2.1 The creation of an 'island-dweller' identity in Scotland

Groups who create an identity, intentionally or otherwise, often create one which is directly linked to how they perceive their environment or human condition (Gerritsen 1994: 113, 235; Bevan 1997: 181). As such, water has traditionally been a particularly strong catalyst for the creation and maintenance of social identities (Gilchrist 1995: 47). Bodies of water typically have the ability to polarise human attitudes - some are terrified of the thought of being surrounded by it, while others cannot imagine a life restricted solely to land. Fundamentally, water is one of the true ironies of the basic human condition: it sustains life yet can quickly take it away - a quality which is not lost upon the fundamental belief systems of many major world religions. This supernatural quality of water may help explain the prehistoric connection to lochs by incorporating spiritual and ritual concerns within a domestic sphere. Those who chose to live on water were making a statement about themselves to others, regardless of their intentions. People who lived on small islets can be viewed as fundamentally distinct because of their unique situation and did not appear to follow societal norms by living on land. They also appear empowered to make their own rules and tout conventional lifestyles by virtue of inhabiting unconventional places. This provides a compelling basis for the creation of a separate identity from those who typify the

norm (i.e. those who live on water, and those who do not). This same manner of thinking can be applied to island dwellers, whether from the first millennium BC or the second millennium AD, whose situation within large expanses of water heightens their distinctiveness from the majority who settle on land. Therefore a key question in island dwelling studies revolves around the *amount of time* spent on islets. If they were year-round habitations, then the attachment to living on water becomes much more plausible. Conversely, if islets were used as seasonal, secondary homes for perhaps pastoralist activities or summer retreats such as Elan Rossdhu (Firat 1996: 15), then the notion of a distinct identity amongst people who used or made them becomes equally less tangible (Morrison 1985: 12-13).

7.2.2 Islet use and status in prehistory – perceived or apparent?

The widespread development of the Atlantic Scottish sequence of island dwelling construction, in the centuries prior to 500 BC, broadly meshes with the transition towards the elevation of the domestic sphere as evidenced by the rise in monumental dwellings stemming from simpler stone hut circles, and marks the shift from emphasis upon elaborate burial practices such as chambered cairns and barrows, to elaborate dwellings instead (Hingley 1992: 187; Armit 1996: 31; Cavers 2006: 16; Henderson 2009: 112). It can be argued that earlier sites or occupation levels from the Pre-Roman Iron Age in south west Scotland, such as the 'forgotten crannogs' (3.5.2) or Dowalton Loch (3.6.1), without the range of artefactual assemblages associated with Early Historic occupation at Buiston or Loch Glashan, were undoubtedly important centres within their local landscape, yet simply lack the material assemblages that often pre-suppose 'high status' on later sites (i.e. imported E-ware, Roman glass or evidence of metal production). Although in later prehistory, crannogs appeared to remain closely tied to agricultural and domestic activities through the ubiquity of quernstones and agricultural items such as ards, they cannot be easily dismissed as simple settlements without special meaning. These watery locations likely had a symbolic significance entrenched within the pagan belief systems witnessed by the Romans. This belief is also belied by the archaeological evidence for watery deposition and in some cases, burials, seen throughout prehistoric Europe.

Digressing for a brief moment, in lieu of written evidence for belief systems amongst

prehistoric islet inhabitants in Scotland, some ethnographic examples of existing lake cultures provide useful insights in how modern inhabitants create personal identities within non-Christian belief systems. Travellers report that the Uros culture who live on floating islands of reeds in Lake Titicaca in Peru identify themselves as *kot-suña* or 'people of the waters' (Kent 2008: 286). The Uros feel at ease, and *own* this familiar, comforting environment that is essentially alien to 'shoredwellers', as outsiders are known (Orlove 1991: 8). Indeed, oral traditions related to visitors state the lake was a retreat from which to avoid enslavement by the Incas; a safe place where the Uros felt they were unable to either drown or be hit by lighting. They also consider themselves to have 'black blood' which makes them immune to the cold as their ancestors existed before the sun, which in turn, was born from the waters of the lake (*ibid*: 12). It is difficult to imagine children who were born and raised on these islets, and who spent their youths on or around water, *not* developing a strong, lasting connection to these places into adulthood. This in turn would have shaped their world-view, how they perceived their own identity and how shared memory amongst group members might be constructed in relation to this watery setting. In light of this, simply looking at the artefactual evidence from occupied islets in Scotland sharply limits the discussion on social structuring and world-view. Equally in prehistory one can ask if 'wealth' or 'status' from a modern Westernised ideology is necessary to shift large amounts of immediately available stone or timber? If one has a large extended family, is outside labour required to build or reoccupy an artificial islet? The answer to both questions is no – yet of course it still requires a considerable effort. In much the same manner as there is not a 'right' way to construct, or even clearly define a crannog, there is no particular social strata which can be said to typify prehistoric island dwellers. Ultimately the ability to obtain the materials and organise the necessary labour required to construct either an artificial islet or an island dwelling says more about status and hierarchy than the somewhat mundane artefacts typically found within prehistoric islet assemblages.

Therefore it could be argued that an expression of inherent status in prehistory is manifest through the very act of constructing an artificial island itself (Bradley 2003: 5). The stark reality is that a tremendous amount of labour and organisation is required to construct even a small artificial island in addition to the causeway or superstructure (i.e. house), and as such implies a moderate level of organisation and the ability to mobilise the resources required for such an undertaking. The locations within standing bodies of water also demonstrate an

intuitive sense of engineering, as many make use of natural bedrock reefs and submerged shelves. Considering that islets surveyed in the Inner Hebrides by Mark Holley ranged in volume from roughly 600m^3 to over 3000m^3, an estimated 1500 to 7500 tonnes of stone are required to create islets within this range, as a cubic metre of gneiss or gritstone weighs approximately 2650kg (Holley 2000:226). Meanwhile the often elaborate means of access can also be seen as triumphs of engineering in themselves. Hebridean sites are often linked to the shore by causeways up to 120m in length, and several, such as at Dun Ban, Grimsay, effectively form underwater walls, up to 2m or more in height, sometimes using stones estimated to weigh over 1 ton each. Substantially reducing this amount to account for the use of natural features or surface irregularities still confidently assumes that a large degree of ingenuity and labour is a prerequisite. Therefore artificial islets in particular represent very deliberate strategies for creating a new 'place' in the landscape, one which represents a concept of status through both control and ownership over the surrounding environment.

7.2.3 The nature of protohistoric and Historic occupants

As the first millennium AD gave way to the medieval/post-medieval period, island dwellings served a multitude of purposes whether they were primarily defensive in nature, or status dwellings of lairds and the social elite; a symbol of persistence and power readily visible in the landscape. One elusive aspect is that while the island dwelling tradition in Early Historic Scotland appears to level off or even wane in popularity from the Iron Age floruit, this transition does not seem to have taken place as a coterminous event in Ireland. Instead, crannog use in Ireland appears to peak in the centuries following the mid-first millennium AD (O'Sullivan 1998: 101) as construction of outwardly monumental domestic structures such as Atlantic roundhouses in Scotland ceases, with island dwelling re-use to see sporadic revivals in the following centuries. Whether this pulse in islet popularity which appears to shift towards Ireland is real, or if it is merely a result of bias in the archaeological record, it nevertheless appears intertwined with political instabilities arising from emerging kingdoms in southern Britain or Ireland itself in the form of Dal Riata (Crone 1993; O'Sullivan 1998: 97; Cavers 2010: 340).

Regardless of geographical variations in peak use, the transition into the Early Historic Period saw island dwellings emerge as more than elaborate settings for domestic homesteads,

based upon a shift from the patently simplistic later prehistoric assemblages which typify Iron Age finds. The structures themselves, rather than portable finds, appear as the showcase for later prehistoric technologies in Atlantic Scotland. This drawn-out transition from lithic and wooden domestic artefacts in prehistory to the appearance of widespread metalworking, leatherworking, eventual ceramic production (on the mainland) and Continental imports, such as at Loch Glashan may suggest an upwardly mobile social class of island dwellers emerging from around the late 5th or 6th century AD onwards. The appearance of imported Continental goods in particular may be a result of Western Europe settling into new frameworks of trade and contact after the vacuum left by the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire. What is evident are distinct differences which emerge in the material record during the Early Historic Period. This is evident through a tangible increase in 'visible' status amongst island dwellers in Early Historic mainland Scotland, yet this does not in itself reflect or presuppose an actual change in the social standing of the inhabitants. What is clear from the nature of the artefactual evidence on either side of the Irish Sea from the Early Historic Period is that islet inhabitants were often (though not exclusively) of an elevated importance and status beyond that of a simple homestead that worked the surrounding land.

The concept of crannogs being largely associated with royalty later in the Early Historic period in Scotland remains debatable while the Irish sites tend to be more frequently categorised in this manner beginning with Hencken's early work at Lagore and Ballinderry (Hencken 1937; 1942; 1950). An underlying link with 'royalty' in the Early Historic period of Scotland is tenuous while occupied islets from any pre- or protohistoric context remain more ambiguous still. Sites such as Moynagh Lough (Bradley 1991), Ballinderry no.2 (Hencken 1933), Lagore (Hencken 1950) and Rathtinaun no.61 (J. Raftery 1957) in Ireland, and Loch Glashan, Argyll (Scott 1960; Crone & Campbell 2005), Buiston, Ayrshire (Crone 2000) and Ederline, Loch Awe (Cavers & Henderson 2005) all have material assemblages datable from this period that are indicative of some status. This group of sites has also revealed 'exotic' goods or functioned perhaps as workshops directly subservient to nearby royal sites as Dunadd in the case of Loch Glashan. The appearance of these imported items or technologies simply can be regarded as a by-product of new concepts which supplemented earlier, more 'egalitarian' assemblages largely restricted to lithics and wooden objects typically of a domestic nature, rather than items which may suggest islets were used by

those of higher social standing. This transition to changing assemblages also follows suit in the Western Isles. The recent excavation of protohistoric or Early Historic Hebridean islets such as Eilean Olabhat, Dun Bharabhat and Berigh all produced evidence of metalworking on-site, often using precious metals or producing 'fine metalwork' such as ring-headed pins (Harding & Dixon 2000:80). Yet given the quantity and density of Hebridean sites, it is clear that not every example could have been used either for metalworking or as a lordly seat. However, sites that do show a departure from the prehistoric assemblages may simply display a more obtainable material culture and not a growing status amongst island dwellers. If anything, it indicates the visible reinvention of wide-ranging sea-based trade networks that probably began some 2000 years earlier in the middle Bronze Age. In a Hebridean context, given the abundance of islets in watery areas such as Benbecula or North Uist, the 'supply over demand' adage likely meant that islet use was both less unusual and less contested than anywhere else in Scotland.

There simply do not seem to be any hard, fast restrictions on which particular segment of society lived on islets, regardless of chronological period. It would have been an issue more closely related to who controlled specific areas around lochs, or in what manner the occupants related to neighbouring communities. In the Western Isles for example, the continued use of islets appears to remain most closely associated with small, perhaps inter-dependent groups involved in agricultural or pastoral activities, as indeed the number of cellular shieling-type structures attest to today. In reality, this may well be a by-product of antiquarian finds over modern fieldwork which is increasingly tipping this balance towards sites of more than simply domestic importance. Therefore it remains difficult and fraught with exceptions when attempting to broadly ascribe a particular status or social role to island dwellers, even within particular periods and geographical locales. While the presence of monumental architecture on prehistoric islets clearly indicates a degree of importance to the *site itself*, it is largely an exercise in ambiguity to categorise the prehistoric inhabitants as holding high political or social roles. Exceptions may include first millennium AD sites which have produced specific objects such as skilled metalwork or 'exotic' items such as imported E-ware, or otherwise have demonstrated a connection with local land-based settlements of 'distinction' such as Whithorn, the Mote of Mark or Dalriatic sites in Argyll. What holds true for island dwellers is that they all shared the common denominator of living on water which, in itself, creates a discreet cultural grouping that is more archaeologically visible than social

status or ranking. Later Medieval accounts also see local chiefs and lords occupying islets as their residences, accompanied by tales of feasting and council meetings. Yet the historical narratives which strictly focus on high-profile events undoubtedly skip the more mundane existence that also was played out by less influential occupants. Beyond the realm of key political players such as kings or local lords or conversely simple farming communities, islets could have easily been adopted by marginalised groups who were unable to settle within the surrounding territories, effectively having to create their own 'place' in the world. Diseased, outcast or otherwise undesirable peoples may have been subject to either *de facto* or *de jure* discrimination. In the case of the former, living away from the main community would have been an 'official' requirement while the latter may have been voluntary. For example, oral tradition still holds that Loch Maberry was used as a leper colony by the monks of Glen Luce Abbey in the south-west (RCAHMS 1912:38). Abandoned islets were also used by outlaws and robbers as discreet places to either skip detection or use as a base from which to carry out small scale raids such as the Loch of Clunie in the mid-15th century (Eles 1915: 183). In addition the presence of metalworking on islets suggests that this activity in particular was one that was carried out in isolation, perhaps voluntarily, to focus upon work without casual interruptions or indeed theft of the manufactured items or raw materials themselves (O'Sullivan 2009: 85). In this particularly important article from O'Sullivan, an examination of early Irish narratives and hagiographies allows contemporary insights into the Early Historic perception of islands (real or mythical) through tales of skirmishes, encounters with mythical creatures, kings and aggressive blacksmiths, amongst other characters. O'Sullivan in particular notes that these sites were simply called *inis* or *oilen* (islands) and not crannogs in these accounts – the artificiality or methods of construction for islets were of no concern whatsoever to the Irish narrators' interests; rather islets were mentioned in terms of their '*edges, boundaries, and the journeys undertaken to and from them*' (*ibid:* 79-80). These observations allude to three points in particular: a wide range in 'social status' amongst the occupants, a complete indifference to islet artificiality and an underlying theme of water transport for mobility.

7.3 Building Islands: Pragmatic Models of Islet Construction and Use

Regardless of who lived on islets, it is difficult to concede that the amount of effort that went into 'island building' was typically for anything less than a central place, albeit on a localised

scale, that indicated implied control of the surrounding landscape by the inhabitants. Given the substantial number of crannogs and island duns in use before the Early Historic and Medieval Periods, interpretations of island dwelling function in prehistory are challenging due to the lack of diagnostic assemblages and multiple layers of re-occupation that complicate stratigraphy, yet it must be considered that they imposed a sense of presence and emotion upon those individuals who encountered them in the landscape. Despite the range of possible islet occupants across differing social strata, what has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout this thesis is a high degree of labour mobilisation was inherent to the initial construction itself, only diminishing proportionately with casual or opportunistic reuse. This understanding allows a number of reliable inferences to be made regarding the construction of prehistoric artificial islets in particular.

For many artificial islets, an 'oversize' labour pool would typically have been involved with the construction of an artificial islet, as the islet itself would be physically incapable of supporting all participants for permanent, continuous habitation (*e.g.* Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn whose singular roundhouse of exceptional quality struggles to reach 8m/dia. internally). This hypothesis only increases in validity if construction occurred as a rapid, synchronic event. Large-scale construction projects, such as southern Scottish hill-forts, would not have this spatial restriction while land-based brochs, for example, 'behave' in a similar manner as crannogs with a disproportionate labour pool to accommodation ratio. If the labour size outstrips occupancy as in the scenario above, this undertaking of limited direct benefit to those involved suggests either the occupants were of elevated standing in the community and could command such tasks such as Loch Finlaggan, Islay, the documented Medieval lordly home of John, First Lord of the Isles.

Other possible inhabitants may have been groups that were marginalised to such an extent it was deemed of vital importance to construct restricted, separate quarters (i.e. lepers or those with contagious illnesses, criminals or groups whose specialised activities were not performed within a public setting such as metalsmiths, shamans or Early Christian clergy or monks). Conversely it is possible that prehistoric islets in particular were not solely inhabited by one select group, rather as a communal area for any number of shared domestic, industrial, ritual or defensive purposes. It is certainly plausible that neighbouring homesteads pulled together to construct individual crannogs, thus spreading the labour demand while strengthening inter-community bonds. Loch Awe and Loch Tay are the most

apparent examples for this scenario with their regular spacing of artificial islets. Other possible examples of this dynamic include 'nucleated' crannog distributions, such as Dowalton Loch or indeed much of the islet settlements in the Uists given the high density in the Hebrides.

In lieu of the 'oversize' labour hypothesis above, a small group, with sufficient time could certainly build their own islet, for example a single extended family. This allows for the unilateral or remote establishment of individual crannogs in areas of limited distribution - a notion which effectively supports the prevailing prehistoric crannog 'homestead' model based upon the overwhelming domestic nature of the artefactual evidence in prehistory. The ubiquity of clearance cairns throughout Highland Scotland also suggests that periodic clearing of agricultural land of stone could have been systematically redeposited within nearby lochs, slowly creating substantial mounds of material over time. Construction on any level presupposes the existence of an established leadership role to not only to commission, design and implement construction, however rudimentary or spontaneous, but also to organise and direct activity once under way. This role could represent anyone number of possibilities from the head of a single homestead to local lords.

Attached to a substantial investment of labour is, by default, a high degree of 'permanency' or non-transient settlement, with a proviso that this use may be connected to pastoral, seasonal activities (*e.g.* an 'islet shieling' or summer home hypothesis) and therefore not an islet in continuous year-round use. In this regard, the construction of a crannog in prehistory may have been a rapid method of creating a lasting claim to a particular grazing area for example, as seen at Loch Tay where the correlation between crannog distributions and modern farm boundaries along the loch is conspicuously similar. To reiterate this concept in another manner: as crannogs witnessed a marked surge in acceptance during the Iron Age, they would have shifted from being an architectural oddity to an architectural symbol for assertion over the local landscape-essentially an Iron Age benchmark of authority and a clear signifier of social equality, if not superiority, amongst neighbouring families. This model suggests the outright implication of ownership or control over the surrounding landscape through the creation of a prominent physical landmark which is not readily removed or altered – a reoccurring theme throughout this thesis, and a view first supported by Morrison (1985: 78). This may be accompanied by a desire to project an image of solitary standing or separation from the rest of society, and by default a sense of immunity or detachment from

conditions which apply to the majority of society (i.e. non-island dwellers). Prehistory notwithstanding, this notion is reinforced by an early 17th century decree which called for the destruction or subjugation of 'islands of strength' in the Western Isles (*ibid:* 23).

7.3.1 Symbolism versus practicality amongst occupied islets

Rather ironically, it is perhaps more challenging to discuss the symbolic aspects of natural islet use than for artificial islets. The use of natural islets is a phenomenon most commonly witnessed in the Western Isles, yet mainland use exists as well (i.e. Melldalloch Island, Argyll). While living on natural islets shares many of the same fundamental concepts with their artificial brethren, the motivation behind natural islet occupation lacks the 'intent' that constructing artificial islands carry – it can be simply seen as an opportunistic use of an existing natural feature. Much of the impetus behind natural islet use can be seen as a by-product of living in a suitably watery environment such as North Uist, and thus, natural sites tend to retain a more functionalist air than completely artificial constructs. In the Western Isles, islet occupation saw levels unparalleled anywhere else in Scotland, in no small part due to a super-abundance of readily available (i.e. natural) sites. This contrasts with a landscape which remains boggy and poorly drained, perhaps making small islets the driest places to settle in many instances. The utilisation of both natural and artificial islets in the Western Isles also suggests motives of practicality that perhaps surpasses those of a symbolic nature, although the notion of symbolism can certainly be applied to 'practical' places such as homes, where the two are effectively intertwined (Hingley 1995: 186).

Under this 'practical' heading, the classic interpretation is one of defence. Yet the initial factor which prompted people to move to small islets remain uncertain. Defence from animals, or at least nuisance pests such as vermin, may have been as important as safety from humans (7.3.3 below). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, *any* island by default is inherently defensive, yet this represents only one restrictive interpretation of use. In reality, the benefits can be widely-varied, including some seemingly inconsequential concerns. After my fieldwork and discussions with colleagues who have worked in Scotland during the summer months, it became clear that midges, initially mentioned in jest during our conversations, are actually another very compelling reason to seek respite and calm on small, windswept islets, which in an occupied, (not abandoned) form, typically lack the vegetation to harbour these incredibly irritating insects.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that defence from humans was one highly visible theme in the historical references from the Medieval Period (O'Sullivan 1998:174; Shelley 2009: 22, 69, 128). Yet was this equally relevant to all areas of Scotland in prehistory as well? One can ask if security from humans would perhaps have been more of a concern in the Western Isles than the interior of the mainland? While this may seem counter-intuitive due to the isolation of the Hebrides, there was a dedicated segment of the population in Western Europe making regular sea journeys along the 'Atlantic Façade'. Even after the breakdown of tin and copper trade networks associate with the bronze trade, this sea-based mobility would have continued on at least an intermittent level; it is human nature to venture beyond the horizon. Any number of foreign seafarers stopping off at the Western Isles, en route to the Irish Sea Zone or Continent, would have provided an irregular flow of outsiders along the shores and inland water-routes of the Hebrides, and a possible source of concern to the indigenous peoples as a result. However uncommon large-scale violence appears in the archaeological record in later prehistory, there would have been an inherent degree of security from random pilfering or threats afforded by islet settlement. When considered within the labyrinthine waterways of much of Benbecula and North Uist, even locating many island dwellings undetected would have proved challenging for outsiders. Furthermore, as Parker Pearson suggests through his orientation of cognitive maps (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2004), repeated - if not steady Scandinavian contact within the Western Isles likely began to consolidate well into prehistory before the much publicised Viking forays in the British Isles in the late 8th century. Therefore 'pre-Norse' forays by Scandinavians provides another potential source of outside contact in later prehistory to consider. Therefore Hebridean inhabitants may have sought small islets with particular interest as neutral places to trade along coastal locations, or as hidden retreats further inland.

Returning to mainland Scotland, the use of natural islets in prehistory is largely avoided in comparison to the Hebrides, a particularly strikingly difference when contrasted with the presence of nearby artificial islands near natural mainland islets. This again suggests that amongst specific groups, the 'act' of building a crannog was more important than simply occupying the first available islet; this subsequently highlights a symbolic quality applied to essentially a domestic tradition here. The artificial creation of 'space and place', a popular term alongside equally popular landscape studies (Taylor 1997: 192), is more apparent with crannogs than perhaps any other form of architecture. Despite a perception of 'neutrality'

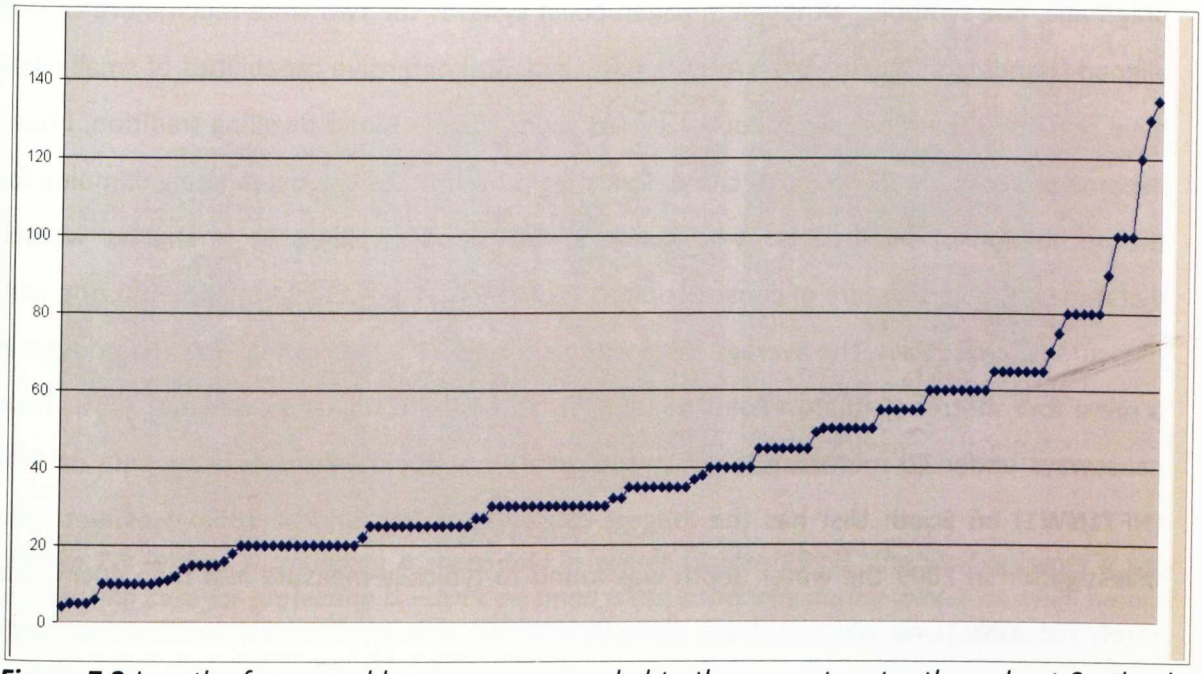


Figure 7.2 *Length of measurable causeways rounded to the nearest metre throughout Scotland. The average length is 40m over 136 sites while the number drops off sharply after 65m, yet the tremendous variability reflects the bespoke nature of islet settlement.*

associated with the Medieval use of crannogs for political summits or meetings, the literal fact remains that artificial islets are the direct, underlying product of a specific kinship group, reinforced perhaps by ancestral investment in the site as well. Anyone not of this group would be bound to appreciate the implications when approaching or standing upon an artificial islet. Yet by the Medieval Period, as architectural forms increase in size, larger natural islets (<30m/dia.) began to supplement, and then surpass, artificial sites as the focal point for both lordly homes and monastic settlements. Natural islands could serve larger numbers of people than even the most substantial crannogs such as Priory Island, and allow for limited agriculture to boost self-sufficiency immediately within immediate reach and away from grazing animals. From the standpoint of Christianity, growing congregations of worshippers (or monastic communities) would also dictate an increase in space. Inchmahone Priory in the Lake of Menteith and Saint Margaret's Inch both stand as clear examples of the growing desire for spacious real estate that crannogs would be hard-pressed to provide, even in their most ostentatious expression.

7.3.2 Fashion over function?

Throughout this thesis it is apparent that the motivation behind the popular use of island dwellings is rooted in what *initially* may appear as two diametrically opposed camps: one

pragmatic, one symbolic, although in pagan belief systems the two were much more closely aligned (Henderson 2007b: 101). Although the practical defensive capabilities of small islets have remained the most highly touted explanations for the island dwelling tradition, I have become increasingly reluctant to cite defence from humans as the overarching stimulus for the occupation of small islets. A large number of island dwellings lie in shallow waters, dictated by the very nature of construction. Out of 136 island dwellings in appendix one with measurable causeways, the average distance to shore is 39.3 metres (fig. 7.2). The closest is a mere four metres (Cameron Point NS38SE55). 86 out of 136 island dwellings (63%) have causeways under 40 metres in length while only 6 are over 100metres long. Dun na Kille (NF71NW1) on South Uist has the longest causeway in Scotland at 135metres, yet from investigation in 2009 the water depth was found to typically measure less than 40cm, and rarely surpassing one metre in depth along its entirety. As a result, island dwellings are often not the impregnable bastions that the one might picture, yet they retain an undeniable element of general security and exclusivity by virtue of restricted access. In fact, the defensiveness of island dwellings is influenced as much by their architectural qualities (i.e. walling, palisades or robustness) than by virtue of being situated on islets. The rationale behind occupation of islets therefore is very much balanced by symbolic, social constructs as it is motivated by the desire for security - a theme which underlies use throughout their chronology.

7.3.3 Protection: predatory animals and islet use

Although the defensive aspects of islets from humans is prevalent in the existing literature, protection from predators and scavengers is scarcely mentioned in existing studies. However, when one considers recent studies, a truly compelling case for the use of islets to protect precious livestock or food stores from predators can be made. Yalden's comprehensive study on British mammals (1999), creates a very different picture of Scotland's fauna than one typically imagines today. Brown bear, lynx, wild cats, wild boar and especially wolves were all present throughout various times from the Early Iron Age to the 17th century in the wilderness of mainland Scotland. In reality, those keeping livestock in northern Britain up until the vast clearances under James I would have been faced with some very real threats to both themselves and their domesticated livestock in the natural landscape. The lynx is a particularly interesting case in that until recently, they were believed to have disappeared during the Mesolithic Period, yet the surprising discovery of a well-preserved lynx skeleton

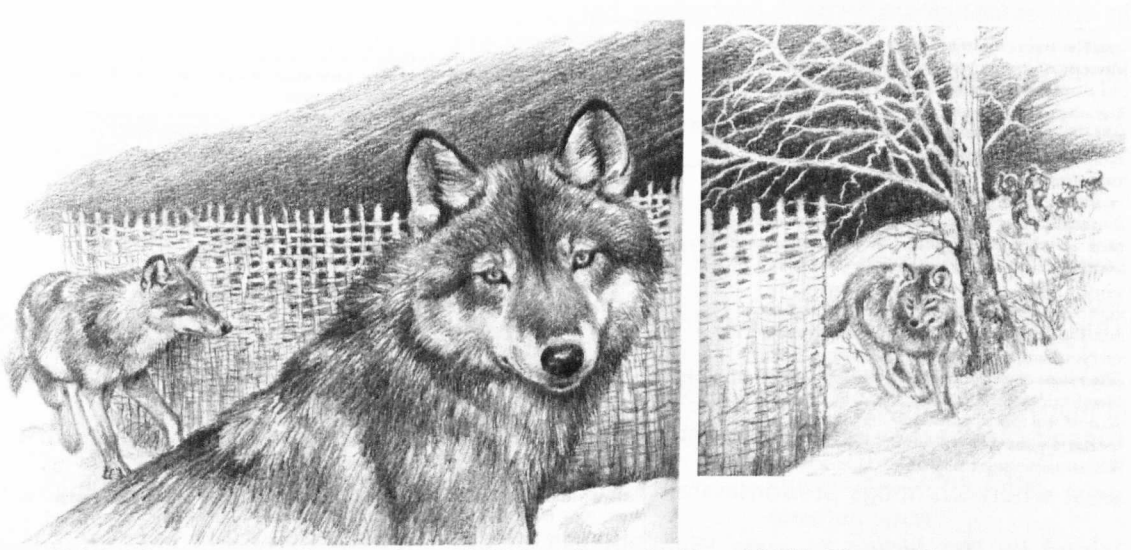


Figure 7.3 *Wolves surrounding a sheep-fold in winter (Yalden 1999). The wolf presents a very compelling case for protecting livestock on small islets, especially during winter or when natural food sources such as roe deer became increasingly scarce due to loss of natural habitat.*

dating to c. 180AD in a cave at Inchnadamph in Sutherland (Lawson 1981: 17) has radically changed this. More recent work which has considered the modern reintroduction of the lynx advances this time-frame even further. Beyond a number of late-first millennium AD references, Hetherington notes 'the Gaelic inhabitants of the Scottish Highlands were still observing its movements into later medieval times' (Hetherington *et al.* 2006: 3). Yalden states that this large discrepancy between what was formerly thought and what is now understood illustrates the tentative nature of trying to pin down extinctions, and even those mammals found in archaeological contexts simply do not represent the last of their kind (1999: 111). Meanwhile, Brown Bear, or *Ursus actos,* survived until at least 2000 BP, with references to 'Caledonian bears being fought at the Coliseum in Rome' (*ibid:* 111), while Welsh hunting laws mention bear as a 'beast of the chase' as late as the 8th century AD.

However, the wolf is by far the most compelling reason to occupy islets as defence from predators (fig. 7.3). Archaeologically, they are difficult to distinguish from large domesticated dogs as their canines and mandibles can be very similar, yet the presence of wolves is historically well-documented in even developed parts of southern Britain until the Middle Ages. Therefore not surprisingly in Scotland their survival persisted much longer. James I required hunters to attend at least three annual wolf hunts to protect livestock numbers until 1457 AD, while the last verified wolf-kill took place in 1680 AD in Perthshire (*ibid:* 168). Therefore, the use of small islets takes on a new meaning when faced with predatory animals which could easily decimate livestock numbers. The loss of even a handful of sheep

in winter could easily tip a precarious balance, and subject local communities to famine. Equally, any consumable foodstuff such as grain or dried meat could be safely stored on islets away from opportunistic consumers.

7.3.4 The implications of watercraft access behind island dwelling function

The benefits of island dwellings from a mobility standpoint are also a vastly understudied element in understanding the rationale behind islet use in Scotland (fig. 7.4). Given the rugged terrain in much of Scotland above the Forth-Clyde region, especially the north and west where crannogs predominate, the use of watercraft (i.e. log-boats and curraghs, later joined by the *birlinn* or west Highland galley) are intimately connected to island-based lifestyles, not only for simple access but also for fundamental communication and transport on a much wider geographic scale. There are a vast number of routes throughout Scotland which can be navigated by small craft with a shallow draft, especially resilient, portable craft such as skin-boats. These watercourses range from broad, slow rivers to swift, narrow burns requiring occasional portaging. While the Lothians surrounding Edinburgh do have a number of small streams such as the Almond, the Leith and the Esks, the only potential crannog in the area remains Duddingston Loch-some 2.5km from the Firth of Forth in a heavily altered human landscape. Beyond the availability of lochs themselves, the relationship of navigable waterways to island dwelling use may well hold direct correlations as the distribution of occupied islets literally disappears south-east of the Firth of Forth.

The presence of causeways linked to occupied islets by no means implies that boats were not used. However, a number of deepwater islets in the archaeological record *require* watercraft for access. Although the appendix database indicates a large number of causewayed islet sites, the remaining majority, without *known* causeways, present an issue which impacts directly upon interpretation. For the majority of mainland examples which would rely upon timber for causeways, underwater archaeology has largely been focused upon the mound itself and not what lies on the surrounding lochbed. It can be assumed with confidence that a much larger number of mainland sites were indeed connected to shore via causeways, but due to decay, extensive silting and taphonomic processes they would require dedicated action to verify-something not likely given the overall paucity of underwater investigation. In contrast, Hebridean sites with typically robust stone causeways provide examples unaffected by erosion and decay, easily visible even on aerial photographs.

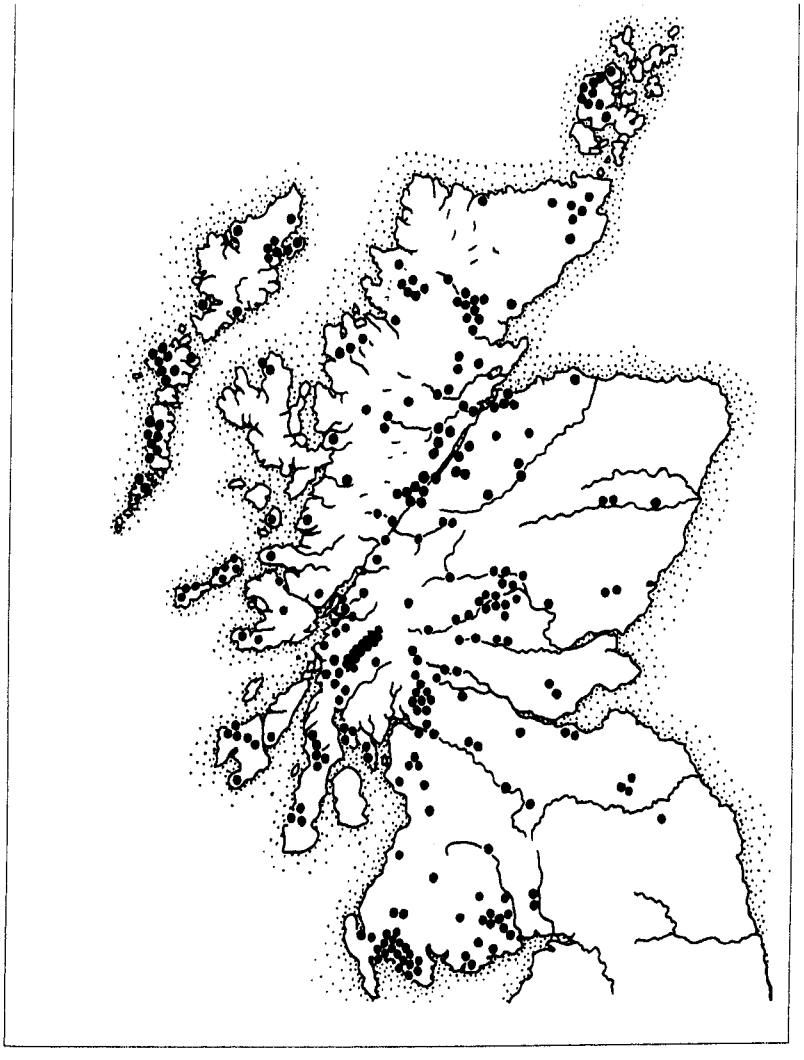


Figure 7.4 *Mid-1980s distribution map of islet sites modified from Morrison (1985). Although the overall density has increased since this map was produced, the key observation to be made here is the location of islets predominately near the coast or along inland waterways and large highland lochs. The role of watercraft transport in Scottish island dwellings studies has rarely been touched upon.*

However, a large number of island dwellings simply exist in water too deep or far from shore to reasonably suspect the existence of causeways, thus requiring the use of watercraft. The relationship of boats in regards to island dwellings may be classified under three different categories:

1. *Insular* craft, restricted to a single loch which does not contain a navigable outlet
2. *Inshore* craft which can navigate a series of lochs or waterways, yet do not have marine access
3. *Unlimited mobility* craft having access to major waterways such as rivers, estuaries or the sea itself.

The freedom of movement afforded by watercraft within lochs and waterways in an island dwelling context is virtually unmentioned in Scottish archaeology. Equally, despite being integral to island life, the implications of sea or inter-loch access in relation to island dwelling function have not been previously discussed. One therefore cannot reasonably expect marine sites such as Dun Vulan on South Uist, Redcastle in the Beauly Firth or Dun Thomaidh, Vallay Sound to 'function' or exist for the same reason as a remote, insular

Highland site such as Loch Beannach (NC71SW4) in Sutherland. Coastal sites, located within rich natural resources of marine life, provide a rationale unto themselves as bases from which to harvest important sources of nutrition. Yet besides being well-located for addressing food concerns, they are also effectively the first port of call for sea-craft navigating along the coast or across estuaries; a place to barter, enquire or monitor wider movements. The 'bolthole' hypothesis common to orthodox crannog interpretations, simply does not hold up for these high profile sights occupying a central, easily accessible place in the marine environment. Conversely, small islets within the hinterland, cut-off from extensive water-routes and located in agriculturally unproductive areas *do* appear to represent low-profile retreats, especially if vegetation and sporadic occupation preserve a natural, unassuming appearance. In particular, this calls into question the logic behind the re-use of many inland sites, as abandoned islets would quickly revert to a 'wild' state beyond the reach of grazing animals, requiring substantial clearance to rejuvenate them to their original state. Therefore the habitation phases of islets likely witnessed intense activity occurring on and around the 'new' site, as would be expected. However, the nature of radiocarbon dates from island dwellings throughout Scotland depict ubiquitous reuse in a sporadic manner perhaps separated by centuries, such as Buiston. This would imply a concerted effort was needed to rejuvenate previously abandoned islets for long-term habitation, or otherwise suggests expedient use as hasty retreats for 'insular' islets not connected to major water-routes.

7.4 In Closing

7.4.1 Expanding the archaeological audience

The study of mainland crannogs has evolved over the past three decades into a discreet later prehistoric speciality set uneasily at times within both the wider context of islet use (i.e. Hebridean and natural examples) and Scottish archaeology overall. In a British or Continental context, crannogs are practically a non-entity. This statement is reflected in the modern mainstream record; the word 'crannog' appears only once in the current keystone text on the Iron Age in Britain (Cunliffe 2010: 15), while the acknowledgement that islets of *all* description were used remains even more obscure in mainstream archaeological discourse. Despite the presence of island settlement in Scotland from virtually every chronological horizon since the Neolithic, save the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, there has been a

seemingly obsessive focus on later prehistoric mainland crannogs by a handful of specialist; this has perhaps unintentionally distanced the subject from the wider archaeological community. Popular images of archaeologists involved with crannog excavations may appear as a scuba-diving fringe who revel at the discovery of a well-preserved wood chip or hazelnut shell in the middle of a murky Highland loch. However, there is an understandable explanation for all of this: out of 571 island dwellings in Scotland, the majority of sites (347 or 60.7%.) *are* classed as crannogs, while in turn the majority of excavated examples *have* shown a clear bias towards the Iron Age (*cf* Henderson 1998). Yet as this thesis has demonstrated, the longevity and variation across a large scale of both time and space greatly complicates the simple view of people constructing artificial islets during the Iron Age in Scotland. At the same time, this thesis has hopefully created a narrative which perhaps holds more appeal to the wider archaeological community as it examines a broader spectrum of society (that happens to live on small islets), over an equally broad time-span. Much of the current bias is perhaps down to research frameworks and excavator aims. I feel the use of natural islets is under-represented in the current archaeological record directly due to the fact that a.) they are not affected by modern development which would uncover signs of past human activity, and b.) they are not targeted by excavations. Known artificial islets (through the presence of timber piles for example) often guarantee a considerable return on the effort involved, as virtually every single element the excavator touches was brought to the site by human hands. However, natural islet use in the Western Isles carries a much higher profile as both the stone-built causeways and structures are often unmistakable. Equivalent timber constructions on natural islets such as roundhouses (again, Melldalloch Island) simply would have long-since vanished and are therefore invisible without intrusive efforts.

7.4.2 Assigning 'meaning' to occupied islets

Although the chronological scale of islet use is perhaps initially daunting to those who specialise in a certain period, when broken down into archaeologically visible sequences it is easier to come to terms with the overall phenomenon. On many levels, islets are perhaps the most opportunistic expression of human nature despite the perceived difficulties in living (or indeed building) on water. The function or meaning of an islet is susceptible to constant change even during a single phase of a site's use, let along during much later sequences of reoccupation. The range of functions that can be ascribed to occupied islets may at first seem closely restricted to those of land-based settlements, such as homes near arable land

or close to sources of subsistence, but distinct differences stand out which prevent occupied islands from easily falling into the same rationale. Mobility, defence, symbolism, individuality and practicality can manifest themselves in almost unlimited combinations when trying to pin down the logic for islet use, especially in prehistory. Therefore the 'meaning' of islets is one that is perhaps fleeting and changeable, even within a generational scale. Short-term use which reflects seasonal activities such as pastoralism or grain processing may suddenly change when social dynamics are destabilised, rapidly becoming places of security or symbols of strength rather than a simple domestic setting within an agricultural backdrop. As mentioned above, islets may have been the only safe place to keep animals during difficult winters when predators were desperate to seek out easy food sources, while a change in seasons may once again see little interest in an islet until the next stimulus to reoccupy arises.

Therefore one must be careful when taking a linear approach which might suggest that the original meaning or function of a site, once changed, cannot return. A prehistoric homestead that is slowly abandoned and largely forgotten can swiftly become a bolthole or boundary marker much later in time, only to revert once again into an obscure, abandoned place in the landscape which retains only the faintest narrative in collective memories. This in turn allows an original meaning or function to be lost or irrevocably altered when archaeologists attempt to interpret the complex stratigraphy through artefactual or chronological evidence, an approach which may only provide a small sample of the overall biography of a site. Indeed, excavations on artificial islets such as Cult's Loch can create a difficult situation whereby layer upon layer of well-preserved timbers and organics from various chronological contexts can overwhelm attempts to create meaningful occupation sequences through the simple use of stratigraphy. In an ideal, although highly costly situation, virtually every major group of timbers would have to be subject to dendrochronology or at least AMS radiocarbon dating in order to create a truly confident picture of a site's biography. In practise a site such as Ederline indicates both prehistoric and Early Historic occupation, yet it can say little more in regards to the length or intensity of use in the intervening period. As Buiston shows, in reality these phases can be very short-lived and remain vague without the use of dendrochronology, even when extensive radiocarbon analysis is employed. Therefore even though the potential is literally visible, the reality is that *timber* islet sites require very methodical and equally well funded budgets to make the most of their unique ability to speak about the past. Hebridean counterparts, while outwardly representing a separate

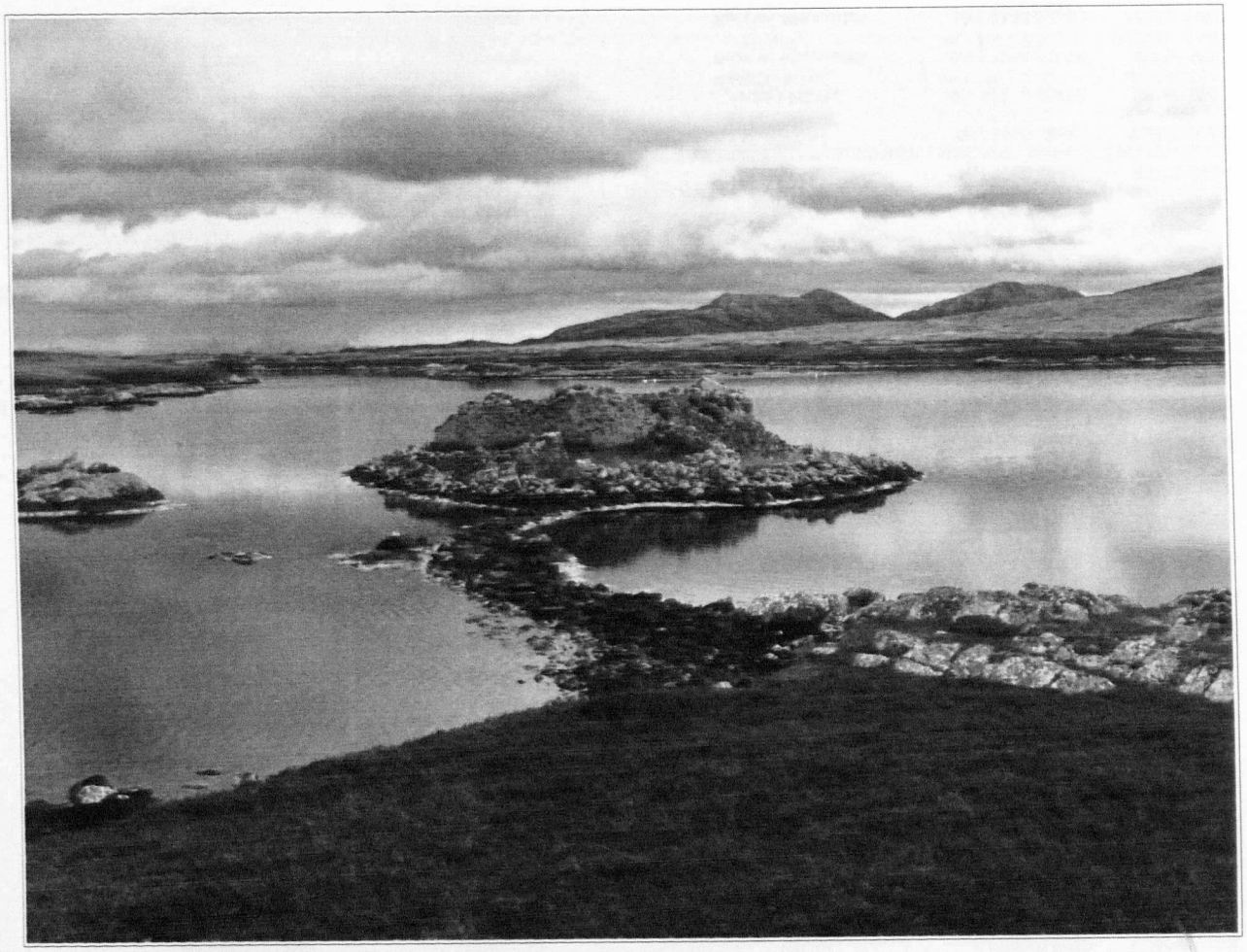
niche due to physical manifestations, can assist mainland interpretations through the lasting use of stone for what essentially amounts to the same type of structures in prehistory – the roundhouse. As with later sites in the second millennium AD, historical references provide rather cryptic accounts of islet use, although the passages or chronicles themselves typically refer to either some activity on the islet (such as feasting) or a transfer in ownership itself through charters, rather than an ethnographic account of the day to day events acted out on islets.

In closing, this thesis has shown that fieldwork in the Western Isles now has the proven potential for a better understanding for all forms of islet use in Scotland. The sheer density of unexamined or unexcavated Hebridean sites affords archaeologists the luxury of selecting from what is arguably the largest untapped reservoir of settlement archaeology in Scotland. Similarly, from a pre- or protohistoric perspective, the pottery tradition in the Western Isles is particularly well preserved along the submerged margins of occupied islets. Their discovery allows for the increased resolution of typological and relative dating, while the frequent underwater discovery of intact pottery during fieldwork for this thesis facilitates the comprehension of finished vessel forms. Therefore, Hebridean island dwellings truly represent a unique opportunity in modern archaeology; one that rather surprisingly exists within arguably the most extensively excavated region of Western Europe – the British Isles. Returning to the mainland, the presence of unknown sites may increase slightly, most notably in the north west, but I would not expect overall numbers to climb beyond approximately 450 examples for completely artificial islands. The number of natural mainland islets which reveal signs of occupation will no doubt increase when attention is eventually directed their way.

In the immediate future, beyond mounting surveys in large highland lochs or excavating underwater sites, islets which were drained in the improvements of the last few centuries provide a compelling case for rescue archaeology while being markedly easier to access. Again, Buiston has shown that even a drained site that was previously excavated in the 19th century can still provide abundant data (*cf* Crone 2000). Dowalton Loch seems an ideal location in which to improve mainland excavation methods, while simultaneously salvaging a unique cluster of sites that are at a very real risk of accelerated decay. The unique placement of crannogs in Dowalton Loch can also create new ways of looking at intensive, 'nucleated' use within a single loch while mitigating the effects of accelerated destruction brought on by drainage. Perhaps most importantly, the development of individual site biographies, such as

Eilean Olabhat (Armit, *et al.* 2008), will create completely new ways of looking at island dwelling use, how it relates to near-by terrestrial settlement, and ultimately the past societies themselves. Equally, on-going advancements in methodology and recording will facilitate fieldwork on these often problematic sites, while increased details of site-use, abandonment and post-depositional processes will continually become clearer through the refinement of absolute dating methods. Given the often tight excavation budgets, hopefully these methods become increasingly affordable as well. Finally, island dwelling excavations are infrequent events; therefore the intensive use of absolute dating, particularly on timber sites, should ideally be fully seized upon to create vivid sequences of site use. Although admittedly cliché, it is nevertheless undeniable that island dwellings will remain one of the most challenging, yet most rewarding aspects of Scottish archaeology. The very remoteness and inaccessibility which characterises Scottish island dwellings has protected a reservoir of archaeology data that will not be exhausted in the foreseeable future – a reassuring notion regarding a finite resource.

Appendix 1: Gazetteer of Scottish Island Dwellings



Listed by current RCAHMS classification

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Inchaffray	Abbey	Perth & Kinross	Madderty	NN9536822515	NN92SE4	56° 23' 00" N	3° 41' 45" W
Eilean Amn Faoileag	Artificial Island	Highland	Clyne	NC 8560 0600	NC80 NE8	58° 01' 42" N	3° 56' 19" W
Eilean Ghruididh	Artificial Island	Highland	Gairloch	NG9517 6927	NG96 NE1	57° 40' 00" N	5° 26' 08" W
Loch Tummel	Artificial Island	PERTH AND KINROSS	BLAIR ATHOLL	NN 847 597	NN85NW 2	56° 42' 53" N	3° 53' 2" W
Loch Hoil	Artificial Island	Perth & Kinross	Dull	NN 860 435	NN84 SE2	56° 34' 11" N	3° 51' 22" W
Graystell Castle (poss)	broch	Caithness	Latheron	ND 1795 4167	ND14 SE4	58° 21' 21" N	3° 24' 14" W
Loch Ardbhair	broch	Highland	ASSYNT	NC 16881 33240	NC13 SE1	58° 14' 59" N	5° 07' 19" W
Burrian Broch	broch	Orkney	BIRSAY AND HARRAY	HY 2964 1835	HY21NE 29	59° 02' 34" N	3° 12' 06" W
Loch Of Brow	broch	Shetland	Durossness	HU 3832 1561	HU31NE 7	59°55'25.69"N	1°19'0.69"W
Loch An Duin	broch	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 8003 5558	NF85NW 4	57°28'37"N	7°20'25"W
Dun Na Buail' Uachdraich	broch	Western Isles	South Uist	NF7777 4606	NF74NE5	57° 23' 25" N	7° 21' 56" W
Craigaherron Island	building	D&G	Girthon	NX6045 6773	NX66 NW 15	54°59' 05" N	4° 10' 56" W
Burned Island	building	D&G	Kells	NX 6576 7284	NX67 SE 41	55° 01' 54" N	4° 06' 06" W
Loch Arklet	building	Stirling	BUCHANAN	n/d	no listing	58° 14' 50" N ?	4° 37' 02" W
Baikie Castle; Shelley	Castle	Angus	Airlie	NO 3184 4932	NO34NW 4	56° 37' 52" N	3° 06' 45" W
Caisteal Na Nigham Ruaidhe	Castle	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9166 1375	NM91SW1	56° 16' 14" N	5° 21' 59" W
Inchgalbraith	Castle	Argyll & Bute	LUSS	NS 36912 90321	NS39 SE 8	56° 04' 40" N	4° 37' 19" W
Lochfergus	Castle	D&G	kirkcudbright	NX69803 50771	NX65 SE31	56° 42' 44" N	3° 56' 28" W
Long Castle: Dowalton; Shelley	Castle	D&G	Kirkinner	NX 3941 4686	NX34NE 6	54° 47' 25" N	4° 29' 53" W
Long Castle	Castle	D&G	Kirkinner	NX 34914686	NX34 NE3	54° 47' 37" N	4° 29' 57" W
Loch Doon Castle	Castle	East Ayrshire	Straiton	NX 48814 94758	NX49SE1	58° 01' 42" N	3° 56' 20" W
Lochindorb Castle	Castle	Highland	Cromdale	NH 9745 3632	NH93 NE1	57°24' 21" N	3° 42' 29" W
Caisteal Dubh	Castle	PERTH AND KINROSS	moulin	NN 9470 5892	NN95 NW1	56° 42' 36" N	3° 43' 17" W
Duke Murdoch's Castle	Castle	Stirling	ABERFOYLE	NN 47275 01413	NN40 SE2	56° 10' 51" N	4° 27' 23" W
Inch Talla	Castle	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NN 57204 00396	NN50 SE5	56° 10' 28" N	4° 87' 04" W
Rusky Castle	Castle	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NN 6144 0338	NN60 SW7	56° 12' 11" N	4° 14' 06" W
St Causnan's Chapel-Shelley	chapel	Angus	Dunnichen	NO 5119 4880	NO54 NW4	56° 37' 43" N	2° 47' 50" W
Loch of Wasdale	chapel /fort	Orkney	Firth	HY 3432 1473	HY31SW 8	59° 00' 53" N	3° 08' 43" W
Sunnybrae Farm?	crannog	Aberdeenshire	ABERDOUR	NJ 881 617	NJ86SE 21	57° 38' 43" N	2° 11' 58" W
Loch Of Leys	crannog	Aberdeenshire	BANCHORY-TERNAN	NO 704 977	NO79NW 3	57° 4' 10" N	2° 29' 18" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Loch Davan?	crannog	Aberdeenshire	GLENMUICK	NJ 4390 0088	NJ40SW 26	57° 5' 42" N	2° 55' 33" W
Prison Island	crannog	Aberdeenshire	GLENMUICK	NO 44348 99517	NO49NW 17	57° 4' 60" N	2° 55' 9" W
St Margaret's Inch	crannog	Angus	Forfar	NO 4412 5063	NO45SW 12	56° 38' 38" N	2° 54' 42" W
Loch Of Kinnordy	crannog	Angus	KIRRIEMUIR	NO 3667 5441	NO35SE 7	56° 40' 38" N	3° 2' 5" W
Barnsdale Castle	crannog	Angus	RESCOBIE	NO 5103 5177	NO55SW 10	56° 39' 17" N	2° 47' 58" W
Moss Of Achnacree	crannog	Argyll & Bute	ARDCHATTAN AND MUCKAIRN	NM 9107 3669	NM93NW 14	56° 28' 34" N	5° 23' 38" W
An Doirlinn	crannog	Argyll & Bute	ARDCHATTAN AND MUCKAIRN	NM 9011 4239	NM94SW 7	56° 31' 36" N	5° 24' 48" W
Auchenheglish	crannog	Argyll & Bute	BONHILL	NS 367 840	NS38SE 23	56° 1' 16" N	4° 37' 13" W
Arden	crannog	Argyll & Bute	BONHILL	NS 367 842	NS38SE 53	56° 1' 22" N	4° 37' 14" W
Clochkeil	crannog	Argyll & Bute	CAMPBELTOWN	NR 6672 2375	NR62SE 1	55° 27' 5" N	5° 41' 24" W
Durry Loch	crannog	Argyll & Bute	CAMPBELTOWN	NR 6781 2236	NR62SE 2	55° 26' 22" N	5° 40' 17" W
Drumhead	crannog	Argyll & Bute	CARDROSS	NS 33 79	NS37NW 8	55° 58' 30" N	4° 40' 36" W
Loch Anlaimh	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 1885 5581	NM15NE 11	56° 36' 35" N	6° 35' 1" W
Loch Breachacha	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 1561 5304	NM15SE 2	56° 34' 57" N	6° 37' 57" W
Loch An Duin	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 2125 5781	NM25NW 1	56° 37' 44" N	6° 32' 48" W
Loch Cliad I	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 2074 5883	NM25NW 7	56° 38' 15" N	6° 33' 21" W
Loch Cliad II	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 2074 5883	NM25NW 7	"	"
Loch Na Cloiche	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 2406 6106	NM26SW 29	56° 38' 15" N	6° 33' 21" W1
Lochan A' Chlaiginn	crannog	Argyll & Bute	CRAIGNISH	NM 819 058	NM80NW 26	56° 11' 41" N	5° 30' 57" W
Loch An Daimh	crannog	Argyll & Bute	CRAIGNISH	NM 8618 1102	NM81SE 2	56° 14' 36" N	5° 27' 9" W1
Mill Loch	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GIGHA AND CARA	NR 6440 5030	NR65SW 9	55° 41' 20" N	5° 44' 56" W
Ardanaiseig	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0913 2487	NN02SE 6	56° 22' 37" N	5° 5' 31" W
Carn An Roin	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0648 2237	NN02SE 15	56° 21' 12" N	5° 8' 1" W
Rockhill	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 07800 22320	NN02SE 16	56° 21' 14" N	5° 6' 40" W
Rockhill II	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 07176 22090	NN02SE 17	56° 21' 7" N	5° 7' 20" W
Ceann Mara	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 073 2279	NN02SE 18	56° 21' 27" N	5° 7' 10" W
Eilean Seileachan	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0906 2417	NN02SE 19	56° 22' 14" N	5° 5' 35" W
Inishail Church	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 0959 2448	NN02SE 20	56° 22' 25" N	5° 5' 7" W
Lochan Na Gealaich	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 04967 23377	NN02SW 14	56° 21' 42" N	5° 9' 31" W
Loch Awe I	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 1215 2647	NN12NW 16	56° 23' 33" N	5° 2' 40" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Achlian	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 1150 2475	NN12SW 5	56° 22' 37" N	5° 3' 11" W
Inistrynich	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 1084 2350	NN12SW 6	56° 21' 58" N	5° 3' 49" W
Eilean An Staicair	crannog	Argyll & Bute	GLENORCHY AND INISHAIL	NN 2904 4252	NN24SE 1	56° 32' 36" N	4° 46' 54" W
Dubh Loch	crannog	Argyll & Bute	INVERARAY	NN 1138 1079	NN11SW 4	56° 15' 5" N	5° 2' 46" W
Sgeir Carnaich	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILBRANDON AND KILCHATTAN	NM 7515 1293	NM71SE 11	56° 15' 19" N	5° 37' 53" W
Lochan Dughaill	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCALMONELL	NR 7904 5862	NR75NE 5	55° 46' 13" N	5° 31' 26" W
Loch Ciaran	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCALMONELL	NR 7778 5403	NR75SE 3	55° 43' 42" N	5° 32' 27" W
Lochan Dughaill II	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCALMONELL	NR 7904 5862	NR75NE 5	55°46' 12" N	5° 31' 35" W
Loch Gorm	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHOMAN	NR 2406 6581	NR26NW 16	55° 48' 23" N	6° 24' 19" W
Ardnave Loch	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHOMAN	NR 2831 7263	NR27SE 18	55° 52' 11" N	6° 20' 38" W
Loch Langeadail	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHOMAN	NR 2660 7127	NR27SE 27	55° 51' 23" N	6° 22' 10" W
Carn Mhic Chealair	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9579 0980	NM90NE 1	56° 14' 13" N	5° 17' 43" W
Erediine	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9688 0978	NM90NE 2	56° 14' 11" N	56° 14' 11" N
Ardchonnell	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9784 1220	NM91SE 9	56° 15' 33" N	5° 15' 54" W
Barr Phort	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9637 1047	NM91SE 10	56° 14' 33" N	5° 17' 16" W
Eilean Fraoch	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NM 9211 1418	NM91SW 2	56° 16' 26" N	5° 21' 30" W
Carn Dubh	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NN 0013 1775	NN01NW 4	56° 18' 34" N	5° 13' 55" W
Sonachan	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NN 04266 20697	NN02SW 17	56° 20' 14" N	5° 10' 5" W
Loch An Droighinn	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILCHRENAN AND DALAVICH	NN 0211 2389	NN02SW 22	56° 21' 58" N	5° 12' 16" W
Carn Daibhidh-Not likely	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILDALTON AND OA	NR 2988 4210	NR24SE 12	55° 35' 50" N	6° 17' 23" W
Loch Nan Diol	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILDALTON AND OA	NR 432 481	NR44NW 38	55° 39' 30" N	6° 4' 60" W
Asgog Loch	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILFINAN	NR 947 704	NR97SW 22	55° 52' 59" N	5° 16' 58" W
Loch Barradil	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 3928 6361	NR36SE 5	55° 47' 43" N	6° 9' 41" W
Loch Nan Deala	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4253 6881	NR46NW 5	55° 50' 37" N	6° 6' 50" W
Loch Ballygrant	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4057 6638	NR46NW 19	55° 49' 12" N	6° 8' 36" W
Loch Staoisha	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4062 7123	NR47SW 4	55° 51' 51" N	6° 8' 47" W
Inverliever	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMARTIN	NM 8894 0484	NM80SE 17	56° 11' 20" N	5° 24' 9" W
Policeman's Bay	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMARTIN	NM 891 049	NM80SE 61	56° 11' 24" N	5° 23' 58" W
Ederline Boathouse	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 8821 0394	NM80SE 18	56° 10' 50" N	5° 24' 47" W
Loch Ederline	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 8671 0252	NM80SE 39	56° 10' 3" N	5° 26' 10" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Loch Ederline II?	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Kilmichael Glassary	NM 8673 0289	NM80SE 40	56° 10' 12" N	5° 26' 11" W
Kilneuair	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 8892 0394	NM80SE 48	56° 10' 51" N	5° 24' 6" W
Fincharn	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NM 9027 0448	NM90SW 5	56° 11' 10" N	5° 22' 52" W
Loch Leathan	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NR 8745 9835	NR89NE 11	56° 7' 48" N	5° 25' 17" W
Loch Glashan	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NR 9159 9249	NR99SW 1	56° 4' 44" N	5° 21' 3" W
Loch Loran	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMICHAEL GLASSARY	NR 9099 9069	NR99SW 5	56° 3' 45" N	5° 21' 33" W1
Loch A' Mhuillin	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8573 2936	NM82NE 1	56° 24' 26" N	5° 28' 26" W
Loch Nell	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8835 2662	NM82NE 23	56° 23' 3" N	5° 25' 47" W
Grianan Mor	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILMORE AND KILBRIDE	NM 8977 2752	NM82NE 24	56° 23' 35" N	5° 24' 28" W
Loch A' Phearsain	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD	NM 8553 1351	NM81SE 3	56° 15' 56" N	5° 27' 51" W
Loch Seil	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD	NM 8039 2029	NM82SW 8	56° 19' 27" N	5° 33' 7" W
Carn Ailpein/not a site	crannog	Argyll & Bute	KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD	NM 8322 2255	NM82SW 11	56° 20' 43" N	5° 30' 31" W
Fasnacloich	crannog	Argyll & Bute	LISMORE AND APPIN	NN 0209 4740	NN04NW 1	56° 34' 36" N	5° 13' 26" W
Elan-Rossdhu	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Luss	NS 3595 8937	NS38NE 3	56° 4' 6" N	4° 38' 11" W
Auchintullich Bay	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Luss	NS 356 868	NS38NE 31	56° 2' 45" N	4° 38' 23" W
Camstraddan	crannog	Argyll & Bute	LUSS	NS 3598 9198	NS39SE 6	56° 5' 30" N	4° 38' 17" W
Luss	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Luss	NS 361 932	NS39SE 13	56° 6' 12" N	4° 38' 8" W
Swan Isle	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Luss	NS 361 914	NS39SE 69	56° 5' 14" N	4° 38' 4" W
Loch Ba	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Mull	NM 5548 3897	NM53NE 1	56° 28' 43" N	5° 58' 22" W
An Dubh Aird	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Mull	NM 579 368	NM53NE 2	56° 27' 40" N	5° 55' 49" W
Gruline	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Mull	NM 563 390	NM53NE 3	56° 28' 48" N	5° 57' 30" W
Gruline II	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Mull	NM 5513 3919	NM53NE 5	56° 28' 49" N	5° 58' 40" W
Loch Quien	crannog	Argyll & Bute	NORTH BUTE	NS 0618 5928	NS05NE 11	55° 47' 14" N	5° 5' 34" W
Loch Quien II	crannog	Argyll & Bute	NORTH BUTE	NS 0656 5988	NS05NE 12	55° 47' 34" N	5° 5' 13" W
Loch Dhu	crannog	Argyll & Bute	NORTH BUTE	NS 0664 6176	NS06SE 16	55° 48' 35" N	5° 5' 12" W
Loch Coille-Bharr	crannog	Argyll & Bute	NORTH KNAPDALE	NR 7788 8949	NR78NE 8	56° 2' 45" N	5° 34' 5" W
Lochan Taynish	crannog	Argyll & Bute	NORTH KNAPDALE	NR 741 855	NR78NW 14		5° 37' 27" W
Eilean Tigh	crannog	Argyll & Bute	SOUTH KNAPDALE	NR 7554 6848	NR76NE 1	55° 51' 23" N	5° 35' 15" W
Loch A' Bhaillidh	crannog	Argyll & Bute	SOUTH KNAPDALE	NR 7556 6331	NR76SE 5	55° 48' 39" N	5° 34' 60" W
Loch Eck	crannog	Argyll & Bute	STRACHUR	NS 140 946	NS19SW 3	56° 6' 29" N	4° 59' 29" W

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Eilean Mhic Chonnill	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Tiree	NL 9695 4677	NL94NE 10	56° 30' 52" N	6° 55' 42" W
Eilean Aird Nam Brathan	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Tiree	NL 9739 4704	NL94NE 11	56° 31' 3" N	6° 55' 20" W
Loch Na Gile	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Tiree	NM 0260 4819	NM04NW 27	56° 31' 54" N	6° 50' 16" W
Loch Na Buaile	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Tiree	NM 0338 4489	NM04SW 3	56° 30' 6" N	6° 49' 21" W
Loch Na Beiste?	crannog	Argyll & Bute		NM 813 058	NM80NW 25	56° 11' 40" N	5° 31' 32" W
Dun Anlaimh	crannog	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 1884 5684	NM15NE 3	56° 37' 7" N	6° 35' 4" W
Elizabeth Isle	crannog	Ayrshire	DALMELLINGTON	NS 4698 0553	NS40NE 13	55° 19' 11" N	4° 24' 47" W
Corby Loch	crannog	City of Aberdeen	OLD MACHAR	NJ 924 145	NJ91SW 15	57° 13' 17" N	2° 7' 33" W
Duddingston Loch	crannog	City of Edinburgh	City of Edinburgh	NT 2794 7241	NT27SE196	55° 56' 20" N	3° 09' 10" W
Corncockle Moss	crannog	D&G	APPLEGARTH	NY 085 865	NY08NE 51	55° 9' 51" N	3° 26' 11" W
Cairniehill Loch	crannog	D&G	BORGUE	NX 624 462	NX64NW 30	54° 47' 30" N	4° 8' 25" W
Barean Loch	crannog	D&G	COLVEND AND SOUTHWICK	NX 8615 5555	NX85NE 3	54° 52' 52" N	3° 46' 32" W
Newbarns Loch	crannog	D&G	COLVEND AND SOUTHWICK	NX 8815 5489	NX85SE 33	54° 52' 31" N	3° 44' 39" W
Friar's Carse	crannog	D&G	DUNSCORE	NX 9189 8465	NX98SW 1	55° 8' 38" N	3° 41' 52" W
Miller's Cairn, Dowalton Loch	crannog	D&G	Glasserton	NX 3977 4654	NX34NE 8	54° 47' 16" N	4° 29' 36" W
Dowalton Loch	crannog	D&G	Glasserton	NX 3979 4668	NX34NE 16	54° 47' 19" N	4° 29' 36" W
Black Loch Of Myrton	crannog	D&G	Glasserton	NX 3612 4280	NX34SE 9	54° 45' 12" N	4° 32' 50" W
White Loch	crannog	D&G	GLASSERTON	NX 4017 4404	NX44SW 2	54° 45' 55" N	4° 29' 8" W
Ravenstone Moss	crannog	D&G	GLASSERTON	NX 40 42	NX44SW 12	54° 44' 50" N	4° 29' 10" W
Black Loch, Castle Kennedy	crannog	D&G	Inch	NX 1139 6118	NX16SW 7	54° 54' 32" N	4° 56' 38" W
Cults Loch III	crannog	D&G	Inch	NX 1203 6058	NX16SW 110	54° 54' 13" N	4° 55' 58" W
Cults Loch II	crannog	D&G	Inch	NX 1190 6062	NX16SW 109	54° 54' 16" N	4° 56' 3" W
Cults Loch I	crannog	D&G	Inch	NX 1206 6047	NX16SW 14	54° 54' 10" N	4° 55' 57" W
Carlingwark Loch	crannog	D&G	Kelton	NX 760 610	NX76SE 8	54° 55' 41" N	3° 56' 7" W
Loch Heron I	crannog	D&G	Kirkcowan	NX 2717 6482	NX26SE 2	54° 56' 52" N	4° 41' 60" W
Loch Heron II	crannog	D&G	Kirkcowan	see above	not in Canmore	54° 56' 50" N	4° 41' 58" W
Stonehouse	crannog	D&G	Kirkinner	NX 4033 4719	NX44NW 1	54° 47' 36" N	4° 29' 3" W
Bramble Island, Lochnaw Loch	crannog	D&G	Leswalt	NW 9950 6323	NW96SE 23	54° 55' 23" N	5° 7' 45" W
Lochnaw II	crannog	D&G	Leswalt	NW 99 55	NW96 SE40	54° 55' 14" N	5° 8' 12" W
Black Loch, Causeway	crannog	D&G	Leswalt	NX 001 635	NX06SW 16	54° 55' 34" N	5° 7' 12" W

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Spedlin's Flow	crannog	D&G	LOCHMABEN	NY 091 872	NY08NE 7	55° 10' 14" N	3° 25' 38" W
Castle Loch I	crannog	D&G	Lochmaben	NY 0853 8130	NY08SE 9	55° 7' 3" N	3° 26' 5" W
Castle Loch II (see above)	crannog	D&G	Lochmaben	NY 0874 8205	NY08SE 67	55° 7' 26" N	3° 25' 55" W
Lochrutton Loch	crannog	D&G	LOCHRUTTON	NX 8983 7299	NX87SE 3	55° 2' 18" N	3° 43' 29" W
Cut Island	crannog	D&G	Minnigaff	NX 383 701	NX37SE 7	54° 59' 57" N	4° 31' 42" W
Elrig III (SWCS)	crannog	D&G	Mochrom	NX 3220 4893	NX34NW 18	54° 48' 24" N	4° 36' 40" W
Castle Loch, Mochrum	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 2800 5300	NX25SE 18	54° 50' 32" N	4° 40' 44" W
Elrig Loch	crannog	D&G	MOCHRUM	NX 3254 4932	NX34NW 17	54° 48' 38" N	4° 36' 24" W
Elrig II lost (SWCS)	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 323 493	NX34NW 23	54° 48' 37" N	4° 36' 36" W
Elrig IV lost (SWCS)	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 325 492	NX34NW 22	54° 48' 34" N	4° 36' 24" W
Rough Loch II	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 318 492	NX34NW 39	54° 48' 33" N	4° 37' 3" W
Loch Wayoch	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 3030 5620	NX35NW 4	54° 52' 18" N	4° 38' 42" W
Long Island	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 3003 5268	NX35SW 13	54° 50' 21" N	4° 38' 51" W
Black Loch	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 30 54	NX35SW 23	54° 51' 6" N	4° 38' 54" W
Rough Loch, Airylick	crannog	D&G	Mochrun	NX 3179 4918	NX34NW 15	54° 48' 30" N	4° 37' 9" W
Loch Arthur	crannog	D&G	NEW ABBEY	NX 9028 6898	NX96NW 1	55° 0' 9" N	3° 43' 1" W
Loch Kindar	crannog	D&G	NEW ABBEY	NX 9689 6423	NX96SE 2	54° 57' 42" N	3° 36' 43" W
Barhapple Loch	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2595 5915	NX25NE 2	54° 53' 46" N	4° 42' 55" W
Dernaglar Loch	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 264 581	NX25NE 6	54° 53' 14" N	4° 42' 25" W
Barlockhart Loch	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2047 5631	NX25NW 7	54° 52' 9" N	4° 47' 57" W
Tree Island, Whitefield Loch	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2323 5509	NX25NW 11	54° 51' 30" N	4° 45' 17" W
Whitefield Loch I	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2332 5510	NX25NW 12	54° 51' 34" N	4° 45' 12" W
Dorman's Island	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2375 5502	NX25NW 21	54° 51' 31" N	4° 44' 49" W
Barnsallie	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 225 551	NX25NW 28	54° 51' 33" N	4° 45' 57" W
Whitefield Loch II	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2355 5486	NX25SW 28	54° 51' 24" N	4° 45' 0" W
Whitefield Loch III	crannog	D&G	Old Luce	NX 2355 5493	NX25SW 30	54° 51' 27" N	4° 45' 0" W
Loch Ochiltree	crannog	D&G	PENNINGHAME	NX 3160 7415	NX37SW 3	55° 1' 58" N	4° 38' 7" W
Loch Ochiltree II	crannog	D&G	Penninghame	NX 3178 7431	NX37SW 11	55° 2' 5" N	4° 38' 2" W
Newlaw	crannog	D&G	RERRICK	NX 743 480	NX74NW 21	54° 48' 40" N	3° 57' 22" W
Black Loch	crannog	D&G	SANQUHAR	NS 7970 1068	NS71SE 6	55° 22' 29" N	3° 53' 55" W

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Dowalton Loch	crannog	D&G	SORBIE	NX 4061 4681	NX44NW 2	54° 47' 26" N	4° 28' 46" W
Dowalton Loch II	crannog	D&G	Sorbie	NX 4076 4694	NX44NW 3	54° 47' 30" N	4° 28' 41" W
Dowalton Loch III	crannog	D&G	Sorbie	NX 4093 4688	NX44NW 6	54° 47' 27" N	4° 28' 29" W
Dowalton Loch IV?	crannog	D&G	Sorbie	NX 4025 4645	NX44NW 10	54° 47' 13" N	4° 29' 8" W
Dowalton V	crannog	D&G	Sorbie	NX 408 468	NX44NW 22	54° 47' 26" N	4° 28' 35" W
Awhirk	crannog	D&G	Stoneykirk	NX 049 533	NX05SW 9	54° 50' 11" N	5° 2' 18" W
Aird Loch	crannog	D&G	TYNRON	NX 821 929	NX89SW 24	55° 12' 58" N	3° 51' 12" W
Milton Loch I	crannog	D&G	Urr	NX 8388 7188	NX87SW 4	55° 1' 37" N	3° 49' 5" W
Milton Loch II	crannog	D&G	Urr	NX 8428 7120	NX87SW 5	55° 1' 18" N	3° 48' 41" W
Milton Loch III	crannog	D&G	Urr	NX 8394 7149	NX87SW 15	55° 1' 25" N	3° 48' 59" W
White Loch Of Myrton	crannog	D&G	Mochrum	NX 3585 4328	NX34SE 8	54° 45' 24" N	4° 33' 7" W
Bishop Loch	crannog	GLASGOW, CITY OF	OLD MONKLAND	NS 687 668	NS66NE 3	55° 52' 35" N	4° 5' 56" W
Loch Morie	crannog	Highland	ALNESS	NH 5457 7517	NH57NW 3	57° 44' 32" N	4° 26' 40" W
Loch Morie II?	crannog	Highland	ALNESS	NH 5457 7517	NH62NW 68	57° 44' 32" N	4° 26' 40" W
Loch Lundie	crannog	Highland	Applecross	NG 8007 4992	NG84NW 3	57° 29' 10" N	5° 40' 15" W
Loch Belivat	crannog	Highland	ARDCLACH	NH 9559 4717	NH94NE 2	57° 30' 8" N	3° 44' 39" W
Lochan Na Crannaig	crannog	Highland	ARDNAMURCHAN	NM 4650 6572	NM46NE 1	56° 42' 51" N	6° 8' 35" W
Loch Nan Eala	crannog	Highland	ARISAIG AND MOIDART	NM 6680 8585	NM68NE 2	56° 54' 18" N	5° 49' 50" W
Loch Na Claise	crannog	Highland	ASSYNT	NC 0354 3082	NC03SW 4	58° 13' 20" N	5° 20' 47" W
Loch Assynt	crannog	Highland	ASSYNT	NC 16 25	NC12NE 3	58° 10' 33" N	5° 7' 45" W
Loch Awe	crannog	Highland	ASSYNT	NC 2480 1589	NC21NW 2	58° 5' 48" N	4° 58' 22" W
Loch Borralan	crannog	Highland	ASSYNT	NC 2574 1138	NC21SE 5	58° 3' 24" N	4° 57' 16" W
Eilean an Tighe	crannog	Highland	ASSYNT	NC 2203 1258	NC21SW 10	58° 3' 58" N	5° 1' 4" W
Cherry Island	crannog	Highland	BOLESKINE AND ABERTARFF	NH 3860 1025	NH31SE 1	57° 9' 16" N	4° 40' 7" W
Loch Knockie	crannog	Highland	BOLESKINE AND ABERTARFF	NH 4619 1407	NH41SE 6	57° 11' 28" N	4° 32' 49" W
Loch Garth	crannog	Highland	BOLESKINE AND ABERTARFF	NH 5209 1762	NH51NW 10	57° 13' 31" N	4° 27' 6" W
Loch Scarmclate	crannog	Highland	BOWER	ND 1847 5969	ND15NE 4	58° 31' 2" N	3° 24' 3" W
Loch Kinellan	crannog	Highland	CONTIN	NH 4710 5759	NH45NE 7	57° 34' 55" N	4° 33' 27" W
Loch Achilty	crannog	Highland	CONTIN	NH 4304 5637	NH45NW 3	57° 34' 11" N	4° 37' 31" W
Loch Cracail Beag	crannog	Highland	CREICH	NC 6313 0067	NC60SW 9	57° 58' 26" N	4° 18' 54" W

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Loch Laro	crannog	Highland	CREICH	NH 60 99	NH69NW 1	57° 57' 31" N	4° 21' 59" W
Loch Migdale	crannog	Highland	CREICH	NH 6259 9159	NH69SW 39	57° 53' 31" N	4° 19' 11" W
Loch Of The Clans	crannog	Highland	CROY AND DALCROSS	NH 825 529	NH85SW 1	57° 33' 4" N	3° 57' 49" W
Loch Of The Clans II	crannog	Highland	CROY AND DALCROSS	NH 8263 5288	NH85SW 2	57° 33' 1" N	3° 57' 43" W
Loch Farraline	crannog	Highland	DAVIOT AND DUNLICHITY	NH 5576 2160	NH52SE 1	57° 15' 45" N	4° 23' 34" W
Tullich (Loch Ruthven III)	crannog	Highland	Daviot and Dunlichity	NH 635 281	NH62NW 68	57° 19' 24" N	4° 16' 07" W
Loch Ruthven	crannog	Highland	DORES	NH 6036 2758	NH62NW 4	57° 19' 1" N	4° 19' 12" W
Easter Ruthven	crannog	Highland	DORES	NH 606 273	NH62NW 67	57° 18' 54" N	4° 18' 53" W
Loch Buidhe	crannog	Highland	DORNOCH	NH 6692 9826	NH69NE 2	57° 57' 12" N	4° 14' 58" W
Loch Hope	crannog	Highland	Durness	NC 473 587	NC45NE 22	58° 29' 24" N	4° 37' 12" W
Loch Hope II	crannog	Highland	Durness	NC 45 53	NC45SE 2	58° 26' 17" N	4° 39' 20" W
Loch Gamhna?	crannog	Highland	DUTHIL AND ROTHIEMURCHUS	NH 892 070	NH80NE 73	57° 8' 27" N	3° 49' 52" W
Loch Vaa	crannog	Highland	DUTHIL AND ROTHIEMURCHUS	NH 9121 1745	NH91NW 11	57° 14' 4" N	3° 48' 10" W
Loch Naver	crannog	Highland	Farr	NC 6549 3821	NC63NE 52	58° 18' 43" N	4° 17' 52" W
Loch Nan Ealachan	crannog	Highland	Farr	NC 6780 5197	NC65SE 5	58° 26' 9" N	4° 15' 53" W
Loch Tollaidh	crannog	Highland	GAIRLOCH	NG 8423 7872	NG87NW 5	57° 44' 47" N	5° 37' 36" W
Loch Kernsary	crannog	Highland	GAIRLOCH	NG 8816 8024	NG88SE 9	57° 45' 42" N	5° 33' 45" W
Loch Caol Na H-Innse-Geamhraidh	crannog	Highland	GAIRLOCH	NG 8707 9299	NG89SE 4	57° 52' 30" N	5° 35' 32" W
Loch Mhic' Ille Riabhaich	crannog	Highland	GAIRLOCH	NG 906 844	NG98SW 1	57° 48' 1" N	5° 31' 28" W
Coire An Lochain (discounted)	crannog	Highland	GLENSHIEL	NH 012 105	NH01SW 2	57° 8' 33" N	5° 17' 10" W
Big Island	crannog	Highland	HALKIRK	ND 0661 6019	ND06SE 15	58° 31' 10" N	3° 36' 13" W
Redcastle	crannog	Highland	KILLEARNAN	NH 5857 4895	NH54NE 2	57° 30' 30" N	4° 21' 44" W
Coulmore	crannog	Highland	KILLEARNAN	NH 6102 4764	NH64NW 41	57° 29' 51" N	4° 19' 11" W
Ballachulish Moss	crannog	Highland	KILMALLIE	NN 0554 6059	NN06SE 3	56° 41' 45" N	5° 10' 37" W
Loch Nam Marag	crannog	Highland	KILMALLIE	NN 137 771	NN17NW 8	56° 50' 53" N	5° 3' 19" W
Eilean Darach	crannog	Highland	KILMALLIE	NN 195 878	NN18NE 3	56° 56' 47" N	4° 58' 4" W
Island Columbkill	crannog	Highland	KILMALLIE	NN 1599 8885	NN18NE 7	56° 57' 14" N	5° 1' 40" W
Island Columkill II (poss)	crannog	Highland	KILMALLIE	NN159 888	no listing	56° 57' 13" N	5° 01' 43" W
Lochan Lunn Da-Bhra	crannog	Highland	KILMALLIE	?	none	58°44' 41" N	5° 07' 59" W

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Eilean Nan Mhuilchean	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NH 257 022	NH20SE 1	57° 4' 41" N	4° 52' 34" W
Eilean Nan Mhuilchean II	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NH 265 019	NH20SE 2	57° 4' 32" N	4° 51' 45" W
Eilean Mhic Raonuill	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NH 2975 0371	NH20SE 3	57° 5' 34" N	4° 48' 40" W
Eilean Na H-Ealaidh	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NH 3183 0075	NH30SW 1	57° 4' 0" N	4° 46' 28" W
Eilean Drynachan	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NH 3276 0188	NH30SW 5	57° 4' 37" N	4° 45' 37" W
Eadarloch	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NN 3473 7683	NN37NW 1	56° 51' 12" N	4° 42' 40" W
Eilean Macmuchan	crannog	Highland	KILMONIVAIG	NN 301 982	NN39NW 2	57° 2' 37" N	4° 48' 3" W
Loch Bruicheach	crannog	Highland	KILTARLITY AND CONVINTH	NH 4544 3687	NH43NE 5	57° 23' 44" N	4° 34' 22" W
Loch Glass	crannog	Highland	KILTEARN	NH 5326 7039	NH57SW 3	57° 41' 56" N	4° 27' 48" W
Torcroy?	crannog	Highland	KINGUSSIE AND INSH	NH 773 000	NH70SE 16	57° 4' 29" N	4° 1' 27" W
Loch Gynack	crannog	Highland	KINGUSSIE AND INSH	NH 74 02	NH70SW 1	57° 5' 31" N	4° 4' 47" W
Carn Dubh	crannog	Highland	KIRKHILL	NH 6175 4730	NH64NW 4	57° 29' 42" N	4° 18' 28" W
Phopachy	crannog	Highland	KIRKHILL	NH 6025 4670	NH64NW 40	57° 29' 21" N	4° 19' 57" W
Loch Crunachdan	crannog	Highland	LAGGAN	NN 5427 9272	NN59SW 1	57° 0' 9" N	4° 24' 3" W
Loch Shin	crannog	Highland	Lairg	NC 4609 1986	NC41NE 1	58° 8' 26" N	4° 36' 59" W
Loch Shin II	crannog	Highland	Lairg	NC 5769 0685	NC50NE 15	58° 1' 40" N	4° 24' 41" W
Little Loch Shin	crannog	Highland	Lairg	NC 58 06	NC50NE 79	58° 1' 15" N	4° 24' 15" W
Loch Achaidh Na H-Inch	crannog	Highland	LOCHALSH	NG 8117 3095	NG83SW 1	57° 18' 58" N	5° 38' 8" W
Loch Achall	crannog	Highland	LOCHBROOM	NH 17 95	NH19NE 3	57° 54' 25" N	5° 5' 20" W
Loch Dughaill	crannog	Highland	LOCHCARRON	NG 99 46	NG94NE 2	57° 27' 36" N	5° 21' 5" W
Loch Teamait	crannog	Highland	MORVERN	NM 7480 4702	NM74NW 1	56° 33' 39" N	5° 39' 56" W
Eilean Nan Clach	crannog	Highland	MOY AND DALAROSSIE	NH 7770 3405	NH73SE 3	57° 22' 49" N	4° 2' 4" W
Lochan Dirty (n.c.)	crannog	Highland	PETTY	NH 788 502	NH75SE 10	57° 31' 33" N	4° 1' 27" W
Loch Flemington	crannog	Highland	PETTY	NH 8097 5210	NH85SW 5	57° 32' 37" N	3° 59' 24" W
Loch Craggie	crannog	Highland	ROGART	NC 6304 0710	NC60NW 17	58° 1' 56" N	4° 19' 13" W
Loch Beannach	crannog	Highland	ROGART	NC 7396 1137	NC71SW 4	58° 4' 23" N	4° 8' 17" W
Loch Achnacloich?	crannog	Highland	ROSSKEEN	NH 6650 7362	NH67SE 13	57° 43' 57" N	4° 14' 32" W
Loch Na Sguabaidh?	crannog	Highland	Strath	NG 5600 2316	NG52SE 22	57° 14' 1" N	6° 2' 37" W
Loch An Tigh-Choimhid	crannog	Highland	TONGUE	NC 662 607	NC66SE 14	58° 30' 51" N	4° 17' 50" W
Loch Aslaich	crannog	Highland	URQUHART AND GLENMORISTOI	NH 4083 2357	NH42SW 1	57° 16' 28" N	4° 38' 27" W
Loch Meikle	crannog	Highland	URQUHART AND GLENMORISTOI	NH 43 30	NH43SW 1	57° 20' 1" N	4° 36' 30" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Loch Beannacharain	crannog	Highland	URRAY	NH 2437 5085	NH25SW 3	57° 30' 48" N	4° 56' 1" W
Loch Watten	crannog	Highland	WATTEN	ND 2443 5585	ND25NW 11	58° 29' 3" N	3° 17' 48" W
Loch Of Yarrows	crannog	Highland	WICK	ND 3114 4416	ND34SW 37	58° 22' 49" N	3° 10' 42" W
Loch Assapol	crannog	KILFINICHEN AND KILVICKEON	Mull	NM 3986 2107	NM32SE 8	56° 18' 36" N	6° 12' 27" W
Loch Poit Na H-I	crannog	KILFINICHEN AND KILVICKEON	Mull	NM 3143 2313	NM32SW 13	56° 19' 27" N	6° 20' 43" W
Eilean Ban	crannog	KILNINIAN AND KILMORE	Mull	NM 4773 4933	NM44NE 1	56° 34' 4" N	6° 6' 27" W
Loch Frisa	crannog	KILNINIAN AND KILMORE	Mull	NM 48 48	NM44NE 2	56° 33' 23" N	6° 6' 5" W
Ledmore	crannog	KILNINIAN AND KILMORE	Mull	NM 5151 4696	NM54NW 20	56° 32' 54" N	6° 2' 37" W
Loch Nam Miol	crannog	KILNINIAN AND KILMORE	Mull	NM 5185 5273	NM55SW 2	56° 36' 2" N	6° 2' 39" W
Loch Builg?	crannog	Moray	KIRKMICHAEL	NJ 187 042	NJ10SE 1	57° 7' 18" N	3° 20' 34" W
Bog Hall?	crannog	North Ayrshire	BEITH	NS 358 543	NS35SE 14	55° 45' 15" N	4° 37' 0" W
Buiston	crannog	North Ayrshire	DREGHORN	NS 4155 4352	NS44SW 2	55° 39' 33" N	4° 31' 11" W
Kilbirnie Loch	crannog	North Ayrshire	KILBIRNIE	NS 3238 5356	NS35SW 5	55° 44' 45" N	4° 40' 19" W
Ashgrove Loch	crannog	North Ayrshire	KILWINNING	NS 2759 4431	NS24SE 1	55° 39' 42" N	4° 44' 33" W
Ashgrove Loch	crannog	North Ayrshire	KILWINNING	NS 274 442	NS24SE 26	55° 39' 38" N	4° 44' 39" W
Todhill Farm	crannog	North Ayrshire	STEVENSTON	NS 2930 4210	NS24SE 10	55° 38' 33" N	4° 42' 45" W
Lochend Loch	crannog	North Lanarkshire	OLD MONKLAND	NS 706 661	NS76NW 2	55° 52' 15" N	4° 4' 6" W
Stony Holm	crannog	Orkney	BIRSAY AND HARRAY	HY 3113 2731	HY32NW 6	59° 7' 38" N	3° 12' 14" W
Rousay, Bretta Ness	crannog	Orkney	ROUSAY AND EGILSAY	HY 3972 3324	HY33SE 12	59° 10' 54" N	3° 3' 19" W
Rousay, Loch Of Wasbister, Burrian	crannog	Orkney	ROUSAY AND EGILSAY	HY 395 334	HY33SE 77	59° 11' 0" N	3° 3' 32" W
Loch of Stenness	crannog	Orkney	Sandwick	HY 260 151	HY21NE 85	59° 1' 1" N	3° 17' 20" W
Loch Tummel	crannog	Perth & Kinross	BLAIR ATHOLL	NN 8119 5962	NN85NW 1	56° 42' 47" N	3° 56' 34" W
Stormont Loch	crannog	Perth & Kinross	BLAIRGOWRIE	NO 1930 4222	NO14SE 55	56° 33' 54" N	3° 18' 48" W
Loch Of Clunie	crannog	Perth & Kinross	CLUNIE	NO 113 440	NO14SW 4	56° 34' 47" N	3° 26' 39" W
Loch Drumellie	crannog	Perth & Kinross	CLUNIE	NO 141 442	NO14SW 141	56° 34' 55" N	3° 23' 55" W
Loch Of Clunie	crannog	Perth & Kinross	CLUNIE	NO 1142 4445	NO14SW 26	56° 34' 60" N	3° 26' 33" W
Neish Island	crannog	Perth & Kinross	Comrie	NN 6905 2422	NN62SE 2	56° 23' 31" N	4° 7' 21" W
Loch Freuchie	crannog	Perth & Kinross	Dull	NN 8619 3752	NN83NE 6	56° 30' 57" N	3° 51' 5" W
Crannag Nan Luban	crannog	Perth & Kinross	FORTINGALL	NN 38 39	NN33NE 2	56° 30' 55" N	4° 37' 60" W
Eilean Nam Faoileag	crannog	Perth & Kinross	FORTINGALL	NN 5304 5769	NN55NW 3	56° 41' 14" N	4° 24' 1" W

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Eilean Beal Na Gaoire	crannog	Perth & Kinross	FORTINGALL	NN 5090 5715	NN55NW 4	56° 40' 55" N	4° 26' 3" W
Milton Boathouse	crannog	Perth & Kinross	Kenmore	NN 5996 3465	NN53SE 20	56° 28' 58" N	4° 16' 31" W
Morenish	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 595 346	NN53SE 33	56° 28' 57" N	4° 16' 54" W
Tombreck	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 659 371	NN63NE 17	56° 30' 25" N	4° 10' 45" W
Old Manse	crannog	Perth & Kinross	Kenmore	NN 682 371	NN63NE 20	56° 30' 27" N	4° 8' 31" W
Eilean Nam Breaban	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 6408 3620	NN63NW 3	56° 29' 54" N	4° 12' 34" W
Milton Morenish	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 6137 3540	NN63NW 17	56° 29' 25" N	4° 15' 11" W
Priory Island	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 766 453	NN74NE 5	56° 35' 1" N	4° 0' 34" W
KENMORE	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 774 453	NN74NE 126	56° 35' 1" N	3° 59' 47" W
Spar Island	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 7730 4511	NN74NE 21	56° 34' 55" N	3° 59' 52" W
Kenmore Pier	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 772 452	NN74NE 22	56° 34' 58" N	3° 59' 58" W
Croftmartaig	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 750 436	NN74SE 5	56° 34' 4" N	4° 2' 4" W
Mary's Distaff	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 757 449	NN74SE 8	56° 34' 47" N	4° 1' 26" W
Fearnan Hotel	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 7207 4430	NN74SW 3	56° 34' 24" N	4° 5' 1" W
Oakbank	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KENMORE	NN 7230 4429	NN74SW 16	56° 34' 21" N	4° 4' 43" W
Keiter's Loch	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KINFAUNS	NO 1687 2192	NO12SE 19	56° 22' 56" N	3° 20' 51" W
Loch Leven	crannog	Perth & Kinross	KINROSS	NO 1270 0175	NO10SW 11	56° 11' 60" N	3° 24' 26" W
Loch Monzievaird	crannog	Perth & Kinross	MONZIEVAIRD AND STROWAN	NN 8430 2339	NN82SW 15	56° 23' 16" N	3° 52' 27" W
An T-Eilean	crannog	PERTH AND KINROSS	BLAIR ATHOLL	NN 8119 5962	NN85NW1	56° 42' 44" N	3° 56' 28" W
Langbank West	crannog	Renfrewshire	Clyde	NS 3813 7355	NS37SE 9	55° 55' 38" N	4° 35' 30" W
Erskine Bridge	crannog	RENFREWSHIRE	ERSKINE	NS 4554 7288	NS47SE 56	55° 55' 24" N	4° 28' 22" W
Erskine Bridge II	crannog	RENFREWSHIRE	ERSKINE	NS 461 722	NS47SE 57	55° 55' 6" N	4° 27' 47" W
Langbank	crannog	RENFREWSHIRE	ERSKINE	NS 4355 7283	NS47SW 22	55° 55' 22" N	4° 30' 17" W
Langbank East	crannog	RENFREWSHIRE	ERSKINE	NS 4050 7328	NS47SW 29	55° 55' 31" N	4° 33' 11" W
Castle Semple	crannog	Renfrewshire	LOCHWINNOCH	NS 36 59	NS35NE 6	55° 47' 47" N	4° 36' 59" W
Craigie Mains	crannog	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	CRAIGIE	NS 408 316	NS43SW 18	55° 33' 7" N	4° 31' 26" W
Lochspouts	crannog	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	KIRKOSWALD	NS 2885 0586	NS20NE 8	55° 18' 59" N	4° 41' 54" W
Drumore Loch	crannog	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	MAYBOLE	NS 3386 0976	NS30NW 15	55° 21' 11" N	4° 37' 18" W
Lochlea	crannog	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	TARBOLTON	NS 4575 3027	NS43SE 5	55° 32' 28" N	4° 26' 44" W
Hyndford	crannog	South Lanarkshire	Lanark	NS 9061 4187	NS94SW 10	55° 39' 27" N	3° 44' 20" W

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Loch Ard	crannog	Stirling	ABERFOYLE	NN 4653 0211	NN40SE 1	56° 11' 13" N	4° 28' 25" W
Loch Ard II	crannog	Stirling	ABERFOYLE	NN 4571 0129	NN40SE 3	56° 10' 43" N	4° 29' 10" W
Lochearnhead	crannog	Stirling	BALQUHIDDER	NN 5985 2306	NN52SE 3	56° 22' 43" N	4° 16' 14" W
Rowchoish Point?	crannog	Stirling	BUCHANAN	NN 336 036	NN30SW 3	56° 11' 45" N	4° 40' 56" W
Inchcruin?	crannog	Stirling	BUCHANAN	NS 385 908	NS39SE 12	56° 4' 58" N	4° 35' 44" W
Keppinch	crannog	Stirling	BUCHANAN	NS 4144 9015	NS49SW 2	56° 4' 39" N	4° 32' 55" W
Portnellan Island,	crannog	Stirling	Callander	NN 5925 0615	NN50NE 2	56° 13' 36" N	4° 16' 17" W
Loch Venachar?	crannog	Stirling	Callander	NN 568 060	NN50NE 5	56° 13' 30" N	4° 18' 36" W
Loch Achray	crannog	Stirling	Callander	NN 5095 0660	NN50NW 1	56° 13' 43" N	4° 24' 19" W
Loch Achray II?	crannog	Stirling	Callander	ee above, not likel	NN50NW 2		
Loch Lubnaig	crannog	Stirling	Callander	NN 584 111	NN51SE 3	56° 16' 17" N	4° 17' 13" W
Craggan	crannog	Stirling	Kenmore	NN 6645 3600	NN63NE 18	58'29"50N	4° 10' 14" W
Dall Farm South	crannog	Stirling	KENMORE	NN 6744 3623	NN63NE 19	56° 29' 57"	4° 9' 16" W
Dall Farm North	crannog	Stirling	KENMORE	NN 673 362	NN63NE 26	56° 29' 57" N	4° 9' 22" W
Firbush	crannog	Stirling	KENMORE	NN 602 339	NN63SW 5	56° 28' 36" N	4° 16' 12" W
Loch Lubhair?	crannog	Stirling	KILLIN	NN 42 26	NN42NW 2	56° 23' 60" N	4° 33' 38" W
Eilean Sputachan	crannog	Stirling	Killin	NN 5824 3422	NN53SE 2	56° 28' 43" N	4° 18' 9" W
Loch Essan	crannog	Stirling	Killin	NN 412 285	NN42NW 4	56° 25' 19" N	4° 34' 30" W
Loch Laggan	crannog	Stirling	KIPPEN	NS 625 925	NS69SW 4	56° 6' 20" N	4° 12' 40" W
Lake Of Menteith	crannog	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NN 580 011	NN50SE 9	56° 10' 53" N	4° 17' 17" W
Inchmahome East	crannog	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NN 577 006	NN50SE 70	56° 10' 37" N	4° 17' 33" W
Dog Isle	crannog	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NN 5676 0027	NN50SE 72	56° 10' 23" N	4° 18' 30" W
Gartur	crannog	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NS 5710 9875	NS59NE 5	56° 9' 35" N	4° 18' 4" W
Lochend House?	crannog	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NS 571 987	NS59NE 7	56° 10' 6" N	4° 16' 16" W
Loch Coulter	crannog	Stirling	ST NINIANS	NS 761 861	NS78NE 9	56° 3' 6" N	3° 59' 23" W
Cameron Bay	crannog	WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE	BONHILL	NS 376 832	NS38SE 54	56° 0' 51" N	4° 36' 20" W
Cameron Point	crannog	WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE	BONHILL	NS 377 832	NS38SE 55	56° 0' 51" N	4° 36' 14" W
Erskine Ferry	crannog	WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE	OLD KILPATRICK	NS 4656 7211	NS47SE 23	55° 55' 3" N	4° 27' 23" W
River Clyde	crannog	WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE	OLD KILPATRICK	NS 4575 7281	NS47SE 47	55° 55' 25" N	4° 28' 11" W
Dumbuck	crannog	WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE	OLD KILPATRICK	NS 4157 7392	NS47SW 8	55° 55' 55" N	4° 32' 15" W

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Lochcote	crannog	West Lothian	TORPHICHEN	NS 978 742	NS97SE 3	55° 56' 60" N	3° 38' 12" W
Lewis, Bragar, Loch An Duna	crannog	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 28484 47347	NB24NE 56	58° 19' 49" N	6° 38' 25" W
Lewis, Loch Langavat	crannog	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 2168 4831	NB24SW 62	58° 18' 52" N	6° 43'19"W
Lewis, Arnol, Loch Urrahag	crannog	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 325 480	NB34NW 4	58° 20' 21" N	6° 34' 17" W
Lewis, Eilean Loch Arnol	crannog	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 3013 4901	NB34NW 9	58° 20' 47" N	6° 36' 48" W
Lewis, Barvas, Loch An Duin	crannog	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 3925 5425	NB35SE 6	58° 23' 55" N	6° 27' 52" W
Taransay, Loch An Duin	crannog	Western Isles	Harris	NB 02162 01279	NB00SW 6	57° 54' 3" N	7° 1' 45" W
Lewis, Loch Orasay	crannog	Western Isles	Lochs	NB 39 28	NB32NE 2	58° 9' 50" N	6° 26' 18" W
Lewis, Loch Arnish	crannog	Western Isles	Lochs	NB 4230 3023	NB43SW 13	58° 11' 8" N	6° 23' 5" W
North Uist, Loch Obisary	crannog	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8841 5996	NF85NE 34	57° 31' 19" N	7° 12' 22" W
Loch Carabhat	crannog	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8390 6107	NF86SW 70	57° 31' 43" N	7° 16' 56" W
Loch Carabhat II	crannog	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8491 6237	NF86SW 71	57° 32' 29" N	7° 16' 05" W
Loch An Eilean I	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7468 1692	NF71NW 27	57° 7' 39" N	7° 22' 44" W
Tobha Bheag, Loch A' Phuirt-Ruaidh	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7670 3567	NF73NE 40	57° 17' 47" N	7° 22' 7" W
Ormicate, Loch na Duchasaich	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF7447 3115	NF73SW15	57° 15' 16" N	7° 24' 02" W
Staoinebrig, West Loch Ollay	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7405 3256	NF73SW 16	57° 16' 0" N	7° 24' 33" W
Loch na Duchasaich	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7447 3115	N/D	57° 15' 16" N	7° 24' 2" W
Ormiclate, Loch Ceann A' Bhaigh	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 76 30	NF73SE 7	57° 14' 45" N	7° 22' 22" W
Loch An Eilean II	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7463 1688	NF71NW 28	57° 7' 37" N	7° 22' 44" W
Loch an Eilean II	crannog	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7463 1688	NF71NW28	57° 7' 36" N	7° 22' 43" W
Lewis, Loch Airidh Na Lic	crannog	Western Isles	Stornoway	NB 3992 3410	NB33SE 1	58° 13' 8" N	6° 25' 47" W
Lewis, North Tolsta, Osavat	crannog	Western Isles	Stornoway	NB 5357 4728	NB54NW 7	58° 20' 39" N	6° 12' 46" W
Lewis, Loch Mheadleit	crannog	Western Isles	Uig	NB 0464 3680	NB03NW 13	58° 13' 15" N	7° 1' 55" W
Lewis, Loch Cleidir	crannog	Western Isles	UIG	NB 0365 3437	NB03SW 56	58° 11' 52" N	7° 2' 44" W
Great Bernera,Loch Breaclete	crannog	Western Isles	UIG	NB 1628 3644	NB13NE 42	58° 13' 30" N	6° 50' 5" W
Loch Of Bosquoy	dun	Orkney	BIRSAY AND HARRAY	HY 30671 18203	HY31NW 46	59° 02' 44" N	3° 12' 31" W
Loch Of Brow	dun	Shetland	Durossness	HU 3832 1561	HU31NE 7	59°55'25.69"N	1°19'0.69"W
Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	Barra	NF 6932 0316	NF60SE 4	57° 0' 2" N	7° 26' 52" W
Bay Hirivagh	dun	Western Isles	Barra	NF 7113 0297	NF70SW 1	56° 59' 60" N	7° 25' 5" W
North Hirivagh Bay	dun	Western Isles	Barra	NF 7153 0263	NF70SW 2	56° 59' 51" N	7° 24' 40" W

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Loch Nic Ruaidhe	dun	Western Isles	Barra	NF 702 018	NF 702 018	56° 59' 22" N	7° 25' 53" W
Loch An Duin, Siadar	dun	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 3929 5435	NB35SE 4	58° 23' 58" N	6° 27' 52" W
Dun Baravat	dun	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 461 596	NB45NE 1	58° 27' 4" N	6° 21' 9" W
Loch Shiavat	dun	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 4759 5925	NB45NE 2	58° 26' 54" N	6° 19' 42" W
Dun Sleibhe	dun	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 5050 6267	NB56SW 5	58° 28' 49" N	6° 16' 50" W
Loch an Duna, Bragar	dun	Western Isles	Barvas	NB 28484 47347	NB24NE 56	58°19'25.48"N	6°38'24"W
Dun Buidhe	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7942 5458	NF75SE 1	57° 28' 2" N	7° 20' 55" W
Dun Torcusay	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7618 5313	NF75SE 5	57° 27' 9" N	7° 24' 5" W
Eilean Iain	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 788 535	NF75SE 6	57° 27' 29" N	7° 21' 26" W
Dun Borosdale	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7814 5285	NF75SE 7	57° 27' 4" N	7° 22' 4" W
Dun Ruadh	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7986 5105	NF75SE 8	57° 26' 11" N	7° 20' 14" W
Dun Aonais	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7968 5125	NF75SE 9	57° 26' 17" N	7° 20' 27" W
Dun Shunish	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7807 5086	NF75SE 10	57° 25' 60" N	7° 22' 1" W
Loch An Dunain	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7786 5129	NF75SE 11	57° 26' 12" N	7° 22' 15" W
Gunisary Bay	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 7985 4916	NF74NE 9	57° 25' 9" N	7° 20' 5" W
Eilean An Duin	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 8121 5486	NF85SW 1	57° 28' 17" N	7° 19' 9" W
Loch Na Beire	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 8323 5421	NF85SW 2	57° 28' 2" N	7° 17' 6" W
Loch Hermidale	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 8262 5236	NF85SW 6	57° 26' 60" N	7° 17' 33" W
Dun Mhic Uisdein	dun	Western Isles	Benbecula	NF 8001 5064	NF85SW 7	57° 25' 58" N	7° 20' 0" W
Dun Innisgall	dun	Western Isles	Harris	NG 01964 85243	NG08NW 2	57° 45' 27" N	7° 0' 45" W
Dun Boraigeo	dun	Western Isles	Harris	NG 0307 8372	NG08SW 2	57° 44' 41" N	6° 59' 32" W
Loch Langavat	dun	Western Isles	Harris	NG 0432 9161	NG09SW 6	57° 48' 59" N	6° 58' 49" W
Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	Harris	NG 2247 9659	NG29NW 2	57° 52' 18" N	6° 40' 57" W
Dun Smirvig	dun	Western Isles	Lewis	NG 52 64	NB56SW 7	58° 29' 38" N	6° 15' 24" W
Dun Aimestean	dun	Western Isles	Lewis	NB 4886 6266	NB46SE 6	58° 28' 46" N	6° 18' 35" W
Dun Loch An Duna	dun	Western Isles	Lochs	NB 390 261	NB32NE 1	58° 8' 49" N	6° 26' 10" W
Dun Bhardin	dun	Western Isles	Lochs	NB 3945 2327	NB32SE 2	58° 7' 16" N	6° 25' 34" W
Dun Cromore	dun	Western Isles	Lochs	NB 40123 20699	NB42SW 2	58° 5' 54" N	6° 24' 41" W
Eilean Dubh	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7173 6958	NF76NW 1	57° 35' 45" N	7° 29' 47" W
Dun Steingarry?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7198 6838	NF76NW 2	57° 35' 7" N	7° 29' 30" W

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Dun Loch Shanndaidh?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7325 6858	NF76NW 4	57° 35' 17" N	7° 28' 13" W
Dun Mor?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7808 6218	NF76SE 10	57° 32' 4" N	7° 22' 54" W
Loch Mor 1	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7908 6202	NF76SE 13	57° 32' 3" N	7° 21' 54" W
Loch Mor 2	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7903 6208	NF76SE 14	57° 32' 3" N	7° 21' 54" W
Loch Mor 3	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7921 6229	NF76SE 11	57° 32' 10" N	7° 21' 43" W
Loch Mor 4	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7928 6222	NF76SE 12	57° 32' 10" N	7° 21' 43" W
Dun Thomaidh	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7590 7581	NF77NE 3	57° 39' 19" N	7° 26' 6" W
Eilean A'Ghallain	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 74853 75885	NF77NW 1	57° 39' 16" N	7° 27' 12" W
Eilean A'Ghallain 2	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 74798 75958	NF77NW 2	57° 39' 19" N	7° 27' 19" W
Dun Scolpaig	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 73103 75028	NF77NW 6	57° 38' 46" N	7° 28' 50" W
Loch Nan Gearrachun?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7674 7419	NF77SE 1	57° 38' 27" N	7° 25' 10" W
Loch Nan Gearrachun II	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7659 7440	NF77SE 2	57° 38' 27" N	7° 25' 10" W
Loch Nan Clachan	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7678 7382	NF77SE 4	57° 38' 17" N	7° 25' 8" W
Eileann Maleit	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7748 7388	NF77SE 5	57° 38' 19" N	7° 24' 26" W
Dun Mhic Raouill	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7263 7128	NF77SW 1	57° 36' 43" N	7° 29' 2" W
Sithean Tuath?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7193 7017	NF77SW 6	57° 36' 5" N	7° 29' 38" W
Dun Scarie	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7178 7055	NF77SW 8	57° 36' 18" N	7° 29' 52" W
Cnoc Nan Uan	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7184 7146	NF77SW 9	57° 36' 47" N	7° 29' 51" W
Dun Grogary	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7125 7141	NF77SW 10	57° 36' 45" N	7° 30' 27" W
Dun Mhic Raouill II?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7275 7126	NF77SW 26	57° 36' 43" N	7° 28' 56" W
Loch Nan Gealag	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8650 5939	NF85NE 3	57° 30' 55" N	7° 14' 12" W
Dun An T-Siamain	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 88587 59495	NF85NE 4	57° 31' 3" N	7° 12' 13" W
Dun Ban, Loch Caravat	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8597 5665	NF85NE 5	57° 29' 26" N	7° 14' 36" W
Loch Hornary	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8653 5720	NF85NE 6	57° 29' 47" N	7° 14' 3" W
Dun Ban, Grimsay	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8698 5693	NF85NE 7	57° 29' 38" N	7° 13' 37" W
Loch A'Mhuilinn	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 873 555	NF85NE 8	57° 28' 54" N	7° 13' 7" W
Loch Na Sruthan Beag	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8972 5520	NF85NE 9	57° 28' 51" N	7° 10' 42" W
Loch Obisary 1	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8848 5997	NF85NE 11	57° 31' 19" N	7° 12' 22" W
Eilean Na H-Iolaire I	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8973 5850	NF85NE 13	57° 30' 37" N	7° 10' 57" W
Eilean Na H-Iolaire 2	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8948 5855	NF85NE 14	57° 30' 36" N	7° 11' 15" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Loch Scadavay	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8650 6840	NF86NE 1	57° 35' 48" N	7° 14' 55" W
Loch Deoravat(discounted)	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8889 6609	NF86NE 2	57° 35' 48" N	7° 14' 55" W
Eilean Buidhe	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8963 6861	NF86NE 3	57° 36' 2" N	7° 11' 50" W
Dun Ban	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8127 6692	NF86NW 3	57° 34' 46" N	7° 20' 5" W
Dun Ban Hacklett	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8605 6012	NF86SE 1	57° 31' 19" N	7° 14' 46" W
Loch Na Ceithir-Eileana	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8638 6260	NF86SE 2	57° 32' 41" N	7° 14' 40" W
Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8636 6398	NF86SE 3	57° 33' 22" N	7° 14' 46" W
Loch Obisary 2	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8843 6001	NF86SE 8	57° 31' 22" N	7° 12' 22" W
Eileann Scalaster	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8094 6113	NF86SW 6	57° 31' 39" N	7° 19' 56" W
Dun Na Dise	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8072 6172	NF86SW 15	57° 31' 58" N	7° 20' 11" W
Loch Caravat, Dun Scor	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8439 6209	NF86SW 18	57° 32' 18" N	7° 16' 33" W
Eilean Dubh Dun Scor	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8430 6202	NF86SW 19	57° 32' 16" N	7° 16' 37" W
Dun Ban	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8429 6088	NF86SW 20	57° 31' 37" N	7° 16' 37" W
Loch An Iasgaich	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 82 62	NF86SW 39	57° 32' 10" N	7° 18' 54" W
Dun An Sticer	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 89717 77675	NF87NE 1	57° 40' 52" N	7° 12' 25" W
Eilean An Dunain	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8956 7997	NF87NE 20	57° 42' 6" N	7° 12' 48" W
Oban Skibinish	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8357 7512	NF87NW 11	57° 39' 16" N	7° 18' 26" W
Dunan Ruadh	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8463 7657	NF87NW 13	57° 40' 4" N	7° 17' 27" W
Dun Na Mairbhe	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8628 7472	NF87SE 1	57° 39' 10" N	7° 15' 42" W
Oban Trumisgarry	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8726 7470	NF87SE 2	57° 39' 13" N	7° 14' 42" W
Dun Aonais	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8560 7381	NF87SE 4	57° 38' 40" N	7° 16' 14" W
Dunan Dubh	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8904 7454	NF87SE 5	57° 39' 11" N	7° 12' 53" W
Loch Bru	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8956 7390	NF87SE 7	57° 38' 52" N	7° 12' 20" W
Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8927 7416	NF87SE 18	57° 38' 58" N	7° 12' 39" W
Loch Fada	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8796 7121	NF87SE 19	57° 37' 22" N	7° 13' 44" W
Dun Eashader?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8075 7266	NF87SW 4	57° 37' 48" N	7° 21' 2" W
Loch Nan Geireann?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8465 7278	NF87SW 5	57° 38' 2" N	7° 17' 9" W
Loch A'Gheadais	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9136 5938	NF95NW 1	57° 31' 7" N	7° 9' 25" W
Loch Nan Geireann	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9042 6864	NF96NW 1	57° 36' 4" N	7° 11' 2" W
Dun Ban	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9024 6534	NF96NW 4	57° 34' 17" N	7° 10' 59" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Loch Hunder	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9046 6525	NF96NW 5	57° 34' 14" N	7° 10' 46" W
Dun Leiravay?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9126 6778	NF96NW 6	57° 35' 37" N	7° 10' 10" W
Loch Obisary	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9008 6263	NF96SW 2	57° 32' 50" N	7° 10' 58" W
Loch Iosal An Duin	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 91715 77009	NF97NW 6	57° 40' 38" N	7° 10' 22" W
Dun Mhic Laitheann	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9777 7314	NF97SE 1	57° 38' 47" N	7° 4' 4" W
Loch Na Caiginn	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 95123 71991	NF97SE 2	57° 38' 2" N	7° 6' 35" W
Loch Na Dubcha	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 95748 72461	NF97SE 3	57° 38' 19" N	7° 6' 1" W
Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 95310 72369	NF97SE 4	57° 38' 15" N	7° 6' 24" W
Loch Na Buaile?	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9073 7004	NF97SW 5	57° 36' 50" N	7° 10' 50" W
Dunan Ruadh	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 9747 8312	NF98SE 2	57° 44' 8" N	7° 5' 7" W
Dun Na H-Ola	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF7854 6161	NF76SE 16	57° 31' 49" N	7° 22' 23" W
Loch Fada II	dun	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 8723 7154	NF87SE 16	57° 37' 30" N	7° 14' 29" W
Loch na Duchasaich	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7447 3115	N/D	57° 15' 16" N	7° 24' 2" W
Dun Na Killie	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 746 190	NF71NW 1	57° 8' 47" N	7° 22' 53" W
Eilean Chreamh	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 742 191	NF71NW 2	57° 8' 49" N	7° 23' 18" W
Dun An Duichal	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7431 1885	NF71NW 3	57° 8' 40" N	7° 23' 10" W
Dun Vulan	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 71407 29815	NF72NW 1	57° 14' 27" N	7° 26' 54" w
Upper Loch Bornish	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 74165 29092	NF72NW 2	57° 14' 8" N	7° 24' 10" W
Loch Greanabeck	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 744 272	NF72NW 6	57° 13' 11" N	7° 23' 44" W
Eilean An Staoir	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 732 259	NF72NW 9	57° 12' 26" N	7° 24' 49" W
Loch Cnoc A' Buidhe	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 74824 25883	NF72NW 10	57° 12' 27" N	7° 23' 13" W
Loch Bornish?	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 733 294	NF72NW 11	57° 14' 19" N	7° 24' 59" W
Sgeir Ghlas	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 751 209	NF72SE 1	57° 9' 49" N	7° 22' 33" W
Garrahellie, Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7448 2232	NF72SW 8	57° 10' 33" N	7° 23' 21" W
Loch An Eilein	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7451 2372	NF72SW 9	57° 11' 18" N	7° 23' 21" W
Dun Raouill	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 778 371	NF73NE 3	57° 18' 38" N	7° 21' 8" W
Dun Buidhe	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7744 3883	NF73NE 5	57° 19' 32" N	7° 21' 40" W
Dun Nan Gallan (destroyed)	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7386 3357	NF73SW 4	57° 16' 32" N	7° 24' 49" W
Dun Altabrug	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7490 3439	NF73SW 5	57° 17' 0" N	7° 23' 48" W
Ardnamonie	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 772 462	NF74NE 3	57° 23' 30" N	7° 22' 27" W

Name of Site	Classed As?	Council	Parish	NGR	NMRS	Latitude	Longitude
Dun Uiselan	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7776 4536	NF74NE 6	57° 23' 2" N	7° 21' 53" W
Dun Lochan Nan Carranan	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7838 4584	NF74NE 7	57° 23' 19" N	7° 21' 19" W
Loch An Daill	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7969 4592	NF74NE 8	57° 23' 26" N	7° 20' 2" W
Loch An Duin Mhoir	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 7755 4149	NF74 SE 3	57° 20' 56" N	7° 21' 46" W
Loch Druim An Iasgair	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 8036 4348	NF84SW 1	57° 22' 7" N	7° 19' 9" W
Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 8003 5558	NF85NW 4	57° 28' 36" N	7° 20' 24" W
Loch An Fhaing	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF 8450 5757	NF85NW 7	57° 29' 52" N	7° 16' 4" W
Loch Cille Bhanain	dun	Western Isles	South Uist	NF7685 4138	NF74SE1	57° 20' 52" N	7° 22' 23" W
Dun Beinn Ivor?	dun	Western Isles	Stornoway	NB 495 436	NB44SE 8	not found?	?
Dun Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	STORNOWAY	NB 5563 3591	NB53SW 6	58° 14' 39" N	6° 9' 54" W
Lower Bayble, Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	STORNOWAY	NB 51682 30437	NB53SW 6	58° 11' 33" N	6° 13' 38" W
Loch Swordale	dun	Western Isles	STORNOWAY	NB 5020 3118	NB53SW 13	58° 11' 53" N	6° 15' 6" W
Dun Bharabhat	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 098 353	NB03NE 4	58° 12' 39" N	6° 56' 31" W
Dun Borranish	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 05031 33255	NB03SE 1	58° 11' 20" N	7° 1' 14" W
Dun Baravat	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 04010 34870	NB03SW 3	58° 12' 9" N	7° 2' 22" W
Loch Baravat	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 03875 34875	NB03SW 4	58° 12' 9" N	7° 2' 35" W
Great Bernera, Dun Baravat	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 15598 35563	NB13NE 2	58° 12' 59" N	6° 50' 44" W
Loch An Duin	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 19756 39911	NB13NE 5	58° 15' 31" N	6° 46' 46" W
Borrowston	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 1927 4217	NB14SE 4	58° 16' 40" N	6° 47' 26" W
duplicated-see below	dun	Western Isles	Uig				
Loch Bharavat	dun	Western Isles	Uig	NB 2233 3429	NB23SW 66	58° 12' 33" N	6° 43' 43" W
Tangy Loch	Fortified House	Argyll & Bute	Killean & Kilchenzie	NR 6956 2796	NR62 NE7	55°29' 26" N	5° 36' 57" W
Loch Rathilt	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 2412 6160	NM36 SW20	56° 39' 56" N	6° 30' 18" W
Loch Urbhaig	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 231 578	N/D	56° 37' 48" N	6° 30' 57" W
Bally Hough?	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 174 584	N/D	56° 37' 55" N	6° 36' 33" W
Loch Cliad Ill?	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	Coll	NM 208 584	N/D	56° 38' 3" N	6° 33' 14" W
An Fhir Mhoir	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	KILCHOMAN	NR 2637 6932	NR26NE 4	55° 50' 21" N	6° 22' 20" W
Meildalloch Island	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	KILFINAN	NR 93762 74518	NR97SW 34	55° 55' 9" N	5° 18' 7" W
Loch Allailaidh	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	KILLAROW AND KILMENY	NR 4194 5799	NR45NW 2	55° 44' 44" N	6° 6' 47" W
Caisteal Eoghainn a' Chinn Bhig	Fortified Island	Argyll & Bute	Mull	NM 631 307	N/D	56° 24' 33" N	5° 50' 26" W

Eilean Ruaridh Beag	Island Dwelling	Highland	GAIRLOCH	NG 896 728	NG87SE 4	57° 41' 45" N	5° 31' 51" W
Eilean An Righ	Island Dwelling	Highland	LAGGAN	NN 4987 8755	NN48NE 1	56° 57' 16" N	4° 28' 12" W
Castle Loch (Shelley)	Island Dwelling	Perth & Kinross	Aberdalgie	n/d	N/D	n/d	n/d
Stormont Loch	Island Dwelling	PERTH AND KINROSS	BLAIRGOWRIE	NO 1896 4212	NO14SE 11	56° 33' 50" N	3° 19' 11" W
Loch Corr	Island Dwelling	PERTH AND KINROSS	KILCHOMAN	NR 226 695	NR26NW 11	55° 50' 20" N	6° 25' 53" W
Loch Beanie	Island Dwelling	PERTH AND KINROSS	KIRKMICHAEL	NO 1601 6867	NO16NE 22	56° 48' 5" N	3° 22' 32" W
Loch Kennard	Island Dwelling	PERTH AND KINROSS	LOGIERAIT	NN 9089 4605	NN94NW 1	56° 35' 36" N	3° 46' 43" W
Loch Dornal	Island Dwelling	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	COLMONELL	NX 2942 7622	NX27NE 5	55° 3' 3" N	4° 40' 15" W
Loch Goosey	Island Dwelling	SOUTH AYRSHIRE	COLMONELL	NX 2985 8228	NX28SE 7	55° 6' 18" N	4° 40' 6" W
Dun Mhic Leoid	Island Dwelling	Western Isles	Barra	NL 64767 99611	NL69NW 2	56° 57' 57" N	7° 31' 7" W
Eilean Falasgair	Island Dwelling	Western Isles	Lochs	NB 3831 1592	NB31NE 19	58° 3' 18" N	6° 26' 12" W
Loch Scadavay	Island Dwelling	Western Isles	North Uist	NF86NW 20	NF 838 684	57° 35' 41" N	7° 17' 37" W
Loch Nan Struban	Island Dwelling	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 807 645	NF86SW 16	57° 33' 28" N	7° 20' 24" W
Loch Vausary	Island; Wall	Western Isles	North Uist	NF 7487 7019	NF77SW 21	57°36'14"N	7°26'42"W
Loch A'an (Avon)	Lodge	Moray	KIRKMICHAEL	NJ0151 0250	NJ00 SW3	57° 06' 24" N	3° 37' 21" W
Inchmahome	prioy	Stirling	Port of Menteith	NN57440 00557	NN50SE4	56° 10' 34" N	4° 17' 53" W
Castle Island	Tower House	North Ayrshire	Cumbrae	NS 15248 51348	NS15SE 14	55° 43' 12" N	4° 56' 33" W

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